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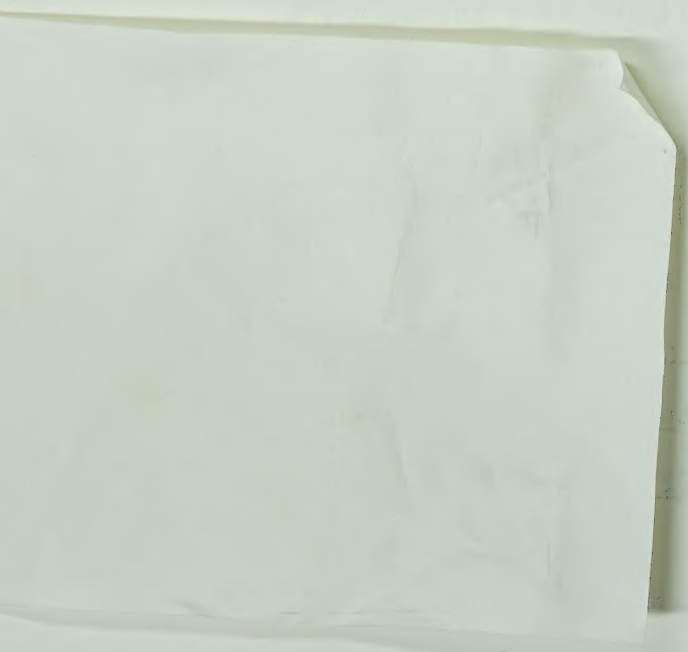
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CONCLUSIONS: \_\_\_\_\_





THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

STYLE IN JOHNSON'S THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE

by

 RHODA J. ZUK

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,  
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FOR STEPHEN





## ABSTRACT

This thesis treats the extraordinary reciprocal relation between world-view and language in four works of Samuel Johnson. While it is apparent that the world-view remains constant in each work, the stylistic mode varies in accordance with the specific subject. Each chapter focuses on Johnson's self-conscious imitation and transcendence of verbal patterns which demonstrate his perfect control of his subject. In the first chapter, which deals with Johnson's letter to the Earl of Chesterfield, the satiric view of a failed social relationship is a constructive mockery. Chapter Two argues that Johnson's critical acumen is self-evident; his critical perspective pervades every aspect of his Preface to Shakespeare through the creation of a supremely appealing aesthetic expression. The third chapter is a study of two Rambler essays (Numbers 170-171) in which the persona is a prostitute. Johnson's intensely ironic view of the place of the prostitute and the reader in society is evident in every aspect of structure and syntax. Chapter Four discusses the simultaneous operation of the prose movement on the reader's emotions and intellect in the Life of Milton. Johnson's ability to communicate, to engage the reader's attention on a number of different levels, substantiates the claim that his contribution to literary, intellectual, ethical, and psychological tradition is indisputable.





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## Introduction

Despite a great body of intelligent and sympathetic scholarship, there exists a commonly held belief amongst those conversant in English literature that Samuel Johnson's writings are -- in keeping with his allegedly anachronistic and stuffy ideas -- pompous, prolix, and obtuse. A careful reading of Johnson's work soon reveals, however, a range of engaging topics and an amazing versatility and aptness of expressive style. His language consistently displays a near-perfect harmony with every particular, specific thought. His meticulously constructed, rhythmic prose reads like poetry; a sentence characterizes the complex psychology of a thought.

In this thesis, I have chosen selections from four different genres to discover the coherence between Johnsonian patterns of thought and Johnsonian patterns of syntax. These four discrete subjects reveal common thematic dispositions and a consequent similarity of style, which typify the writer's habits of thought. The lack of stylistic "development," of a rising and falling, a progressing or declining, of affective ability, is not surprising. Johnson, like other eighteenth-century humanists, has certain essential, persistent prejudices. Very simply, he is an absolutist who attempts to reconcile the contraries of existence. to achieve a resolution between ideas and action, ethics and psychology. Johnson adapts his predilections to the exigencies of the moment. His ideological framework comprehends ethical and emotional life. Therefore his form, instructed by his unquestionable understanding of the traditions and capacities of the language, is marvelously appropriate to the significance of his content.





Chapter One

Rhetorical Appeal in Johnson's  
Letter to the Earl of Chesterfield

Johnson's letter to the Earl of Chesterfield represents a peculiar, intriguing resolution of paradoxical intents: the letter "instructs by pleasing," yet Johnson in the address achieves revenge on Chesterfield. He makes it clear that Chesterfield's "patronage," manifested merely in public recommendation of Johnson's completed Dictionary, is an insult. Johnson brilliantly reciprocates Chesterfield's snub: "I can see through you, now you have a look at me," is Johnson's unspoken yet patent challenge. (Donald Greene rather aptly describes the letter as a "bombshell."<sup>1</sup>) At the same time, however, the letter is entertaining, is in fact a literary masterpiece; indeed, the Earl realized at least its former quality, since he kept the letter "on his table where any visitor could see it."<sup>2</sup> The lexicographer's verbal skill, his sure sense of structure, syntax, diction, figurative language, and even of rhythm allow him to render with flawless self-control an instructive irony: the letter is morally educative. Johnson exhibits a knife-edged wit, yet sustains an ingenuous, artless pose; his self-effacing concessions deflate Chesterfield utterly; he inculcates the Patron with elegant good humour.

Having granted Johnson no audience (and no "favours") in the past, Chesterfield, in reading the letter, must play the part of a spectator, of an auditor, in Johnson's dramatic re-creation of the past. By oscillating between the exaggeration and the understatement of past events, Johnson implies the simple, declarative truth about present circumstances. Johnson's rhetorical techniques are intended to persuade



Chesterfield of the reality of character and situation, and so to convince him of Johnson's perception of the moral truth.

The opening sentence of the letter is, paradoxically, a marvelously ambiguous statement of "police-court fact:" "I have been lately informed by the proprietor of The World that two Papers in which my Dictionary is recommended to the Public were written by your Lordship."<sup>3</sup> Given the history of their relationship, the sentence at once insinuates an irony of situation: the promptness of Johnson's response (he has only "been lately informed") is in contrast to Chesterfield's tardiness in responding to Johnson's original appeal. Johnson avoids direct accusation, but Chesterfield is nonetheless charged.

The use of the passive voice in the restrictive clause ("in which my Dictionary is recommended to the Public") is an artful ironic device: the "Dictionary is recommended to the Public" -- by one who refused to hear it recommended in private. The placement of the subject "I" at the beginning of the sentence and the agent "your Lordship" at the end is mimetic of the estrangement, the lack of direct relationship between Johnson and his so-called patron. The prepositional phrase "by the proprietor of The World" intermediates between subject and agent, between Johnson and Chesterfield. It is a rhetorically fortuitous coincidence that the name of the newspaper is "The World," for the concrete noun tends to correspond with the collective noun "the Public:" "the proprietor" and "the Public" quite literally come between Johnson and Chesterfield, who are bound, very specifically, only by "two Papers." The use of the passive in the sentence prolongs the impression that Johnson is simply conveying information; that he is explaining the occasion of the letter. The real implications of the occasion, which





are of a highly personal nature, are only revealed in the final prepositional phrase, in the last three words of the sentence: "by your Lordship." The passive voice creates a gap between the nominal and referential subjects; between "two Papers" and "your Lordship." Johnson belittles Chesterfield with his syntax as he pretends to be, and is, surprised, even astonished, at the occurrence of the recommendation. The "recommendation" of "my Dictionary" comprises a formal obligation to express gratitude, and the subject of offense. The occasion of the letter poses a rhetorical dilemma which Johnson inimitably resolves.

In the second sentence, the disparity between contextual knowledge and verbal function continues to contribute to a dramatic irony: "To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the Great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge." Not only does Johnson's urbanity of expression belie his professed unworldliness, but his dignified politeness is the vehicle of pointed satire. The placement of the passive infinitive phrase "to be so distinguished" tends to characterize the independent clause as a simple assertion having the force of expository fact, and even of universal truth: "To be so distinguished is an honour. . . ." This impression is contradicted by the ironic development within the relative clause. The irony is facilitated, in part, by the construction of the main clause, which is abridged, insofar as the agent of "distinguished" -- that is, "your Lordship" -- is not included in the expression: the omission implies that Chesterfield's patronage is insubstantial. This uncertainty is intensified by the equivocal "so:" within the exclusive context of "to be so distinguished is an honour," the adverb suggests an unspecified degree of distinction; however, the





degree of distinction has been explicitly stated to be a mere "two Papers" in the preceding sentence.

Johnson in this sentence avoids a sheerly disdainful or blatantly mocking tone by creating a complex ironic texture. The passive participial phrase is inserted between two "ironic inaccuracies:" "To be so distinguished is an honour which . . . I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge." Johnson in no way feels honoured, and he knows very well how to receive and acknowledge Chesterfield's interference. The passive participial phrase, on the other hand, is an "ironic accuracy:" the polite, modest admission that he is "very little accustomed to favours from the great," that he is almost wholly unfamiliar with the privileges of patronage, divulges the patron's culpability. Further, the use of the passive participle ironically suggests a passive, grateful dependence which does not exist: that Johnson is occasionally acted upon by "favours from the Great" is a nuisance, even an insult. At the same time, the participial phrase accounts for Johnson's expressions of perplexity, and so his pretense of blandishment is sustained. Indeed, in his claim in the relative clause that he is uncertain as to how he should respond to Chesterfield's disarming -- or, audacious -- attention, the adverb "well" slyly stresses that Johnson with bewilderment deliberates the appropriate, pleasing rhetorical strategy to answer Chesterfield: after all, he is barely acquainted with the Earl. Chesterfield, great as he is, has never received and has hardly acknowledged Johnson.

Grammatically, "receive" is a transitive verb: he does "not know well how to receive" this "honour." However, the object of "receive" syntactically precedes it, so that the intransitive form, and therefore



the intransitive meaning, is suggested; that he "knows not well how to receive," to be socially gracious. Chesterfield, it is to be remembered, did not receive Johnson as a guest or visitor. A rather comic relation between the grand Earl and the unassuming author is implied: neither has any manners. (At least Johnson is aware of it.) The word "acknowledge" is, in the same way as "receive," an ambivalent usage, since it suggests on the one hand that Johnson's confusion arises from the obligation to express gratitude, and that, on the other hand, he must reluctantly disclose that their social relationship as patron and patronized is non-existent. He cannot accept the Earl's public recognition when he has not received private attention.

Johnson, in the following paragraph, by a self-conscious, reflexive undercutting of his past exaggerated pretensions, deflates the pretension of Chesterfield's late "recommendation" of "my Dictionary." Johnson casts his past attempt to gain Chesterfield's patronage within the context of courtly servility. Johnson's self-mockery and self-disparagement correspondingly reduce the dignity and status of the Patron: if Johnson has behaved like a courtier, Chesterfield responded very like a cruelly inaccessible, if utterly desirable, object of flattering attention. Johnson's longing for a courtly, idealized relationship is not fulfilled; however, his intense yearning was for what is illusory: he is now able to "boast" a substantial scholarly achievement, the publication of the Dictionary. Johnson's consciousness of the comic absurdity of his past self-deluding vanity suggests that he has learned from experience; that he has good sense. Chesterfield must perceive that their past encounter was a travesty of human relations and of social convention which renders his present attempts to patronize Johnson's work as lacking in dignified





good sense. Johnson concludes that Chesterfield has been unjust, but his tone is neither shrill nor plaintive: the outrageous affectation and the bathos which initially colour his recollection are transmuted to good-humoured candour. Johnson, at once charming and veracious, is a model of the "scholar" skilled at "the art of pleasing."

The first sentence of the paragraph encapsulates the dramatic movement from promise ("some slight encouragement") to disappointment ("I found my attendance so little encouraged"), and from enervating sensibility ("I was overpowered") to restorative sense ("neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue") which occurred during their single meeting. The abrupt shift from self-burlesque to impartial self-defense is a psychologically persuasive technique. That is, Johnson is first a caricature, then a dignified and independent gentleman; Chesterfield in the first instance is a phantom, and in the second is a man, careless of proper cultural and social values: his social values are reminiscent of those of a hackneyed literary convention.

Johnson's diction and phrasing are reminiscent of rhetorical seduction: "When upon some slight encouragement I first visited your Lordship I was overpowered like the rest of Mankind by the enchantment of your adress, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself Le Vainqueur du Vainqueur de la Terre, that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending . . . ." However, the hyperbolic protestation of homage is undercut by the ambiguity of verbal usage; by Johnson's strategies of diction and syntax. There are a number of words and phrases in the sentence which are thematically related to Johnson's ironic attempt at courtliness. Double meanings link patronage and French courtly manners: "incourage" means to support, but also



to hearten; "enchantment" refers to what is greatly charming and delightful, but also connotes the fascination of French courtliness; "adress" refers to social poise and oratorical skill, and to attentions in courting. Within this thematic context, the word "favours" in the previous paragraph, which denotes the privileges and concessions of patronage, and, as well, notes and tokens of admiration, contributes to Johnson's ironic use of convention. Further, the generic term in "the rest of Mankind," and the collective noun in "the world" are at once hyperbolic and commonplace: such trite exaltation reduces Chesterfield. Finally, Johnson's intimation of his helpless devotion and desire ("I was overpowered;" "I could not forbear"), followed by his immediate recovery on being coldly accepted ("neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it"), comically diminishes the overwhelming nature of the patron's "adress."

The prepositional phrase "upon some slight encouragement," placed between the subordinating conjunction "when" and the subject and predicate of the relative clause "I first visited your Lordship," is a delicate yet deliberate emphasis justifying Johnson's presumption in approaching Chesterfield. However, "encouragement" is modified by two alliterative adjectives, which quickens the rhythm, and effects a natural emphasis on "slight" (the denotation of which is significant): Johnson thus intimates his eager hope and Chesterfield's cool expectation on the occasion. The substantive and verbal forms of the cognate "encourage" in this sentence denote that Chesterfield is deficient in charitable propensity and action: Johnson visits the Earl "upon some slight encouragement," and is "so little encouraged" that he does not





return. Johnson in both of these instances obliquely condemns Chesterfield as a discouraging agent.

The French expression in "that I might boast myself *Le Vainqueur du Vainqueur de la Terre*" is an affectation well suited to a courtier. However, the high-flown French phrasing (even the reflexive "myself" echoes French syntax) is "translated" into formal, measured English prose: "--that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending." The anaphora ("that I might") emphasizes the dual interpretation of his "wish." There is also a subtle difference in the effect of the subjunctive mood in the two clauses: in the first, the subjunctive most clearly expresses desire; in the second, it allows Johnson to avoid the blunt expression of his "wish." At once bold and deferential, daring and humble, he resolves the paradoxical motives of the true courtier.

There is a connotative association between "*Le Vainqueur*" and "contending" ("contend" can mean to strive in battle for a prize); however, whereas "*Le Vainqueur*" represents the bombastic language of vain hope, "contending" is a usage apposite to the plainer "obtain;" to the expression of sober regard. The linguistic gap between "*la Terre*" and "the world" is reflected in the disparity between the "wish" to be able to "boast" and the "wish" to be able to "obtain." The first wish is beyond the realm of possibility or sense, while the second in itself is a sincerely flattering, because a psychologically sound and equitably expressed, statement of motive. The final independent clause ("I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it"), pointedly introduced by the



adversative coordinator "but," treats the Earl with the utmost diplomacy, and the utmost fairness: the preceding compliment tempers the censoriousness, while the revelation of the patron's supercilious rejection justifies the censure.

This clause is a curiously noble account of his response to Chesterfield's rebuff. The words "pride and modesty" in the adverb clause of result describe antithetical psychological tendencies of personality, yet the linking of them evokes Johnson's temperate disposition. He is too proud and too modest to be importunate. Further, Johnson creates the impression of impartiality through creative grammatical usage. He deflects from himself by personifying the abstract nouns "pride" and "modesty," so that the voice, though formally active, is tantamount to the passive: the pronoun "me," the direct object of "suffer," is acted upon by the subjects "pride" and "modesty." Johnson's retrospective consideration appears not to consider his particular state of mind: the reader is therefore persuaded that Johnson's was a just decision.

The opening of the second sentence of the paragraph ("When I had once adressed" [my italics]) echoes that of the first ("When . . . I first visited" [my italics]). The shift into the past perfect tense further stresses that Johnson and the Earl met only a single time. But Johnson satirizes Chesterfield's conclusiveness: "When I had once adressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly Scholar can possess." The substantive and verbal forms of the cognate "adress" signify that Chesterfield's enchanting "adress" is in contrast to Johnson's most displeasing address: while Johnson is "overpowered," Chesterfield is left bored and indifferent. The conventional, formalized "art of pleasing" is "all" that Chesterfield's interest and patience can accommodate.





Johnson disparages himself as "a retired and uncourtly Scholar," yet he has not withdrawn from the active world: he has completed his Dictionary. He has "retired" only from Chesterfield's presence. Indeed, since "scholar," in the traditional, constraining context of patronage, signifies one given money or aid to continue his studies, Johnson in this self-description proudly excuses his deficiencies, and modestly implies his integrity. Johnson was allowed only one meeting "in public," for Chesterfield could be no further pleased: Chesterfield, therefore, is ill-mannered and presumptuous in recommending the independently completed scholarship "to the Public."

Johnson, in the final sentence of the paragraph, effects, with great sureness, sympathy for himself and disapprobation for the Earl; however, there is a tongue-in-cheek quality about the expression that prevents a querulous, self-righteous, or even a stoical tone: "I had done all that I could, and no Man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little." Whereas the first independent clause is particular and declarative, the second is a generalization having the force of axiom: the implication is, that Johnson was annoyed. The certainty of the universal notion is humourously understated by the juxtaposition of the absolutes "no Man" and "all" with particular qualifiers; with the adverb "well," and the nonrestrictive phrase "be it ever so little" which modifies "all." The concluding phrase, introducing amplifying information beyond what is necessary, creates a sort of overstated understatement. This paradoxical character of redundancy and pointedness creates a humourous summing up of the experience -- a humour that emerges from the objective consideration of human psychology. The phrase confirms the truth of the generalization by creating a



scale by which it may be examined. "All" in the first clause is pronominal; the shift to the substantive "all" in the second clause links "I" to the converse of "no Man" -- to "everyman;" the word "little" in the nonrestrictive phrase indirectly modifies the preceding "all," and so constitutes an oblique oxymoron. Johnson "measures" his own experience with the common one, and the common one with a tentative, yet likely, instance. The universal and the particular are grammatically and contextually melded.

This sentence deftly anticipates Johnson's final rejection of the patron's recommendation. By placing himself in relation to the universal, he affirms his integrity in judging the Earl; by dramatizing a psychological maturation, an experiential, moral progress in himself, he proves himself a capable teacher. The movement of the paragraph suggests that whereas he latterly recognizes and assimilates the components of psychological experience, Johnson originally attempted to elude reality in his vain "wish" to be "Le Vainqueur du Vainqueur de la Terre." Although he first was intensely and unthinkingly eager with regard to the Earl, he will now be sagacious and aloof in his bearing toward him. Chesterfield's disrespect for Johnson as a person, and his long disregard of the endeavors of the author, are reciprocated in the letter to irritate the Earl, and to improve the patron: the letter is a moral lesson, and a lesson in manners.

The effect of the patron's neglect, of his perverse negation of humility, conviction, and animation on Johnson, is the subject of the following sentence: "Seven years, My Lord, have now past since I waited in your outward Rooms or was repulsed from your Door, during which time I have been pushing my work through difficulties of which It is useless to





complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of Publication without one Act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour." The framing of "My Lord" places the patron in the middle of the seven-year struggle; the pause created by this interposition emphasizes the length of time that has passed: the vocative "My Lord" becomes really resonant as Johnson "gives it to him from all sides," as it were.

The tense variations within the sentence also assail Chesterfield with reproachful irony. The close juxtaposition of the present perfect in "Seven years. . . have now past" and the simple past "I waited" creates the contextual suggestion that Johnson has been waiting for something for seven years. Similarly, the imperfect "[I] was repulsed," in its capacity of describing the duration of a past event which has a beginning and a possible ending, conveys the ironic sense of a seven-year repulsion. On the other hand, the passive "I have been pushing" correctly implies that Johnson has endured seven years of difficulties and that the difficulties existing seven years ago still continue. The transition to the simple present "It is" ironically emphasizes Chesterfield's omission in the past, and the imposition of his utterly useless present action. Finally, the sequence of tenses comes full circle with the perfect "[I] have brought," which stresses the unwished-for solitariness of the endeavor of the seven years which "have now past."

In the adverb clause "since I waited in your outward Rooms or was repulsed from your Door," the conjunction "or" signifies that Chesterfield's apathy and antipathy are two aspects of the same thing. Nonetheless, his passivity and his activity together drive Johnson away:



the conjunction denotes alternativeness, but connotes cumulation. The use of "or" rather than "and" emphasizes Chesterfield's ill-usage. The author's patient attendance ("I waited") is in contrast to the patron's impatient rebuff ("[I] was repulsed").

The shift from the active to the passive voice, "I waited . . . or was repulsed," stresses that Johnson acted until he was adversely acted upon. It did not matter what he did, he could not move Chesterfield to help him. Based on the "repulse," the "push" from Chesterfield's door, Johnson has "been pushing on" his "work:" the patron's neglect is the ironic extent of his encouragement. The verbs "pushing" and "brought," the capitalization of "Publication," and the "geographical" connotation of "verge" evoke the notion of a physical burden conveyed to its destination. In vivifying the physical, aggressive connotations of "repulsed" and "pushing," Johnson makes an invidious distinction between the capacity and felicity of his activity, and the action of his patron.

The adjective clause "of which it is useless to complain" and the prepositional phrase "at last" tend to dramatize the laborious passage of time for which Chesterfield, in refusing to aid Johnson, is partly liable: the extension of the sentence enacts the prolongation of time. The clause "of which it is useless to complain" formally modifies "difficulties," but the qualification actually makes those difficulties more indefinite: the enormity and difficulty of Johnson's labour are, ironically, made clear. Such deft emphasis is reflected too in the words "at last," which stress the long drudgery of "my work." In both of these instances, Johnson decisively indicates that his work is over; that nothing more is to be done.



The final clause also enacts the ponderous progression of Johnson's "work." The anaphoric "one . . . of" contributes to a distinct, heavily stressed, rhythmic pattern: "without one Act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour." Johnson forcefully renders the diminishing intensity of the demands of patronage: Chesterfield neither acts, nor speaks, nor even smiles.

The adverb clause "since I waited in your outward Rooms or was repulsed from your Door" and the prepositional phrases "without one Act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour" ultimately reprehend Chesterfield; grammatically, however, they simply elaborate Johnson's historical ("Seven years, My Lord, have now past"), factual ("[I] have brought it") account: the language of exposition is the language of persuasion. Knowledge of Johnson's integrity and independence, and of the patron's culpability, emerges, not from direct reproach, but from the implications arising from a precise relation of history.

The next sentence incriminates Chesterfield in its ingenuousness, and satirizes him in its precision: "Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before." If "such" is an iamb (Such treat-  
ment"), the tone is bland; if spondaic ("Such treatment"), the tone of the sentence is contemptuous. The word "treatment" connotes both usage and social entertainment: the patron is graceless, and lacks charm. The word "for" formally introduces evidence for the preceding statement: the second clause, then, is either an ironic concession that "now I know what [not] to expect from a Patron:" or, it is a complaint that "I never had a Patron before [-- thanks to you]."

Johnson employs a pastoral allusion to punctuate the equitable and urbane account of his "treatment:" "The Shepherd in Virgil grew at last





acquainted with Love, and found him a Native of the Rocks." He has "at last" finished the Dictionary, and "at last" has recognition from his patron: the allusion functions as a comic analogy of his own history. The example from the Eclogue viii.43 is the authority which, wryly translated though it is, substantiates his disillusionment, and so precludes any impression of cynicism. On the other hand, the expectant note at the end of the first clause, deflated by the encounter with the actual event reported in the second clause, allows Johnson to avoid a bathetic treatment of his case.

The satiric allusion of "Love," and the indirect, outlandish association of Johnson with a "Shepherd," is congruent with his earlier satiric pose as the enchanted courtier: he is now wholly disenchanted. Johnson earlier recalls that "I found my attendance so little encouraged;" here, the "Shepherd . . . found him a Native of the Rocks" (my italics). The latter usage incorporates the notion that the "Shepherd" perceives his evidence visually: Johnson's emotional and intellectual experience is dramatized and empirically confirmed. The phrase "a Native of the Rocks," in conjunction with the word "verge" (in the previous paragraph), which can denote a shoreline, prefigures the vivid analogy of the following sentence, in which the patron is perceived as "useless" in not acting, and obstructive when he does act -- and not only in "repulsing" the author: "Is not a Patron, My Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a Man struggling for Life in the water and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help."

This rhetorical question is a masterful trap; it is a device which begs an obvious answer, and which effects the central irony of the letter. Once again, the placement of the vocative "my Lord" is



incriminating: the statement defines "a Patron, My Lord." The grammatical conjunction ("and") of the patron's characteristics brings into high relief the logical disparity between cruel neglect and redundant attention: the incongruity is devastatingly satirical. While the use of the concrete common noun "a Man" deflects from Johnson's specific predicament, the participle "struggling" recalls Johnson "pushing," and having "brought," his "work:" he suggests strongly and poignantly the tremendous burden of his labour.

The following sentence is a climactic, outright assertion of Johnson's perception of the occasion: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my Labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed until I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it, till I am known and do not want it." The substantive "notice" signifies civil attention; since it denotes, as well, an article announcing a written work, it alludes to the patron's published recommendation of the completed, forthcoming Dictionary. The relative clause "which you have been pleased to take of my labours" seems a polite, formulaic acknowledgement of the Earl's condescension; however, the Earl is set up merely to be cut down. The advantage of the "notice" is negated by its inappropriate timing: "had it been early, had been kind." The suppression of the conditional "if" allows for an economy of expression (as opposed to, for example, "if it had been early, would have been kind"); the repetition of "had been" emphasizes the relation between "early" and "kind."

Further, the use of the subjunctive obviates a negative construction; the delay in the use of negatives until the final series of dependent clauses effects the highly dramatic quality of Johnson's





deliberate and conclusive repulsion of the patron: "it has been delayed until I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it, till I am known and do not want it." The insistent, anaphoric "till I am" emphasizes the sure passage of time, and a pattern of cause and effect: altered circumstances render the "notice" inefficacious. A vigorous internal strength is derived from the logic and rhythmic syntax of the co-ordinate but different predicates within the three dependent clauses:

am indifferent and cannot enjoy it . . .  
 am solitary and cannot impart it . . .  
 am known and do not want it.

The first predicate series is comprised of the copulative verb "am" and an adjectival object complement; the second includes a negative auxiliary, a verb, and the object "it." In the first two clauses, the repeated diction ("am," "and," "cannot," "it") frames the adjectives and the verbs; that is, the description of Johnson's condition, and his incapacity to respond affirmatively to "the notice," are accentuated. Further, in each clause the negative auxiliary and the verb, like the preceding adjective, have four syllables; this four-syllabled diction is framed by the monosyllables "am," "and," and "it." The rhythmic homogeneity of these first two clauses is in contrast to the arrangement of the final clause, in which the adjective and the main verb have one syllable, and there is a shift from "cannot" to "do not:" a sforzando effect is created by this transition to a sequence of emphatic monosyllables. Whereas in the initial two dependent clauses the unemphasized, monosyllabic "it" has a subdued import, here the neuter pronoun is stressed, and its antecedent, "notice," is the more forcibly rejected. That is, Johnson in the first clauses twice denies the positive power of acting,



of enjoying and imparting, then shifts to a decisive dismissal: he neither needs nor desires Chesterfield's patronage.

Paradoxically, Johnson is at once "solitary" and "known." This antithetical description makes clear the pathos of the private (to say that he is now "solitary" is to hint at personal loss) and the integrity of his public (he is "known;" he has proven his worth as a scholar) lives. That Johnson is "indifferent" to the patron's "notice" is understandable: Chesterfield's belated personal attention is as futile as the supererogatory "two papers."

Johnson in moving to the next sentence shifts from pathos to sarcasm. He apologizes for his inability to express gratitude to his patron: "I hope it is no very cinical asperity not to confess obligation where no benefit has been received . . . ." In this instance, the concentration of negatives constitutes litotes: the understatement, meant to impress by moderation, effects, paradoxically, the ironic overstatement that "I am so sorry you didn't do anything for me;" he is very sorry for having nothing for which to be obliged. The expression "I hope" ironically denies the suggestion of Johnson's "cinical asperity;" on the other hand, by prefacing the sentence with "I hope," Johnson effects a rather quizzical tone appropriate to such a self-evident statement.

The parodic tone of obsequious supplication in the main clause is abruptly overturned by the trenchantly articulated principle in the following infinitive clause: "or to be unwilling that the Public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself." Johnson cannot "confess obligation where no benefit has been received," because he and Chesterfield are not the



only agents in the situation: society ("the Public") and God ("Providence") are bound in the truth of the matter as well. The "Public," the "Patron," and "Providence" are visually linked through capitalization, and aurally linked by alliteration. These devices, together with the syntactical placement of the nouns, work to diminish the moral and social stature of the patron: between the consideration of the "Public" and the divine activity of "Providence," the negligent "Patron" is a rather insignificant figure.

Johnson in the letter has at last gained an audience with Chesterfield. He entertains him with elegant, brilliant conversation, then dismisses him: "Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any Favourer of Learning I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less, for I have been long wakened from that Dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, My Lord Your Lordship's Most humble Most Obedient Servant, Sam: Johnson" (my italics). This last sentence is a recapitulation of the range of themes in the letter. The diction, in particular, has acquired ironic resonance (cf. italics). "Having carried on my work thus far" tersely evokes the hardship of "pushing" and of having "brought" "my work" to completion: of "struggling" with no help. The word "Favourer" has, contextually, the connotation of speciousness; the modifying "any" signifies Johnson's refusal to "distinguish" Chesterfield: the phrase "any Favourer of Learning" is a disdainful epithet. The prepositional phrases "with so little obligation" and "with so much exultation," linked by anaphora and marked by antithesis, underscore that Johnson "once boasted" "so much" for "so little." Indeed, the conditional "if less be possible" signifies that the Earl





is one of those whose "all" is "ever so little." The formulaic repetition of "most" in "Most humble Most Obedient Servant" includes an irony of degree: Johnson's overkill in the exaggeration of the superlative actually suggests an inverse meaning -- that he holds his patron in very low esteem. Moreover, if Johnson truly is Chesterfield's "Most humble Most Obedient Servant," then Chesterfield is a most uncourted, unattended patron indeed.

The main clause is a statement resolving not only that Johnson will "expect" nothing of Chesterfield's patronage, but that his patronage will be rebuffed. "I shall not be disappointed" is, superficially, a brave and gracious submission; given the context, however, the words are an ironic substitution for their opposite: "I would be delighted." The coordinate main clause offers Johnson's reasoning for expecting nothing -- "I have been long wakened ["seven years," in fact] from that dream of hope" -- and enacts the snub: the ingratiatory, hyperbolic language of the closing insolently flaunts the illusory nature of Chesterfield's patronage, and of Johnson's obligation. The shift in possessive pronouns in "My Lord, Your Lordship's" emphasizes the lack of relation between the patron and the author. The expression of exaggerated homage in the protestation that he is "Most humble" and "Most Obedient" emphasizes ". . . Johnson's distance from grandeur and pretension, and his ironic pride in his demonstrated independence . . ."<sup>4</sup> With the closing signature "Sam: Johnson," the writer of the Dictionary formally fulfills the obligations of the "recommended," and, rhetorically, clinches "the last word."

This famous letter to Lord Chesterfield no doubt contributes to what Bertrand H. Bronson perceives the popular conception of Johnson to



be: "an eponym for a crushing reply."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Johnson, by the letter, supposedly "dealt the death blow to patronage." Paul Fussell contends that "Of all the 'kinds' of letters Johnson practices . . . of no kind is he more a master than of the severe letter, or the letter of abuse;"<sup>6</sup> the letter to Lord Chesterfield is regarded as paradigmatic of abusive letters. However, Johnson does not in his letter indulge in mere invective, but he rather employs a rhetorical strategy which ensures the reader's sympathetic receptivity to his moral intent. Johnson's great success lies in his use of precise syntax and apt diction to effect a perfectly controlled irony. The rigidly observed formalities -- of salutation, the expression of obligation, the ingratiatory closing -- are contextually hyperbolic and ironic. Johnson's innovative, ironic use of language transcends formal epistolary convention to enact his independent, instructive, exemplary behavior. At the same time, Ian Watt's characterization of the humanizing, self-effacing nature of Johnson's irony provides a balanced perspective of Johnson's stance:

The rhetoric usually operates through fairly conscious hyperbole . . . Johnson brings himself -- his own anger, not to say unhappiness -- into the irony; he is not outside the ironic contradiction of attitudes but within it . . . this drastically qualifies what might otherwise appear to be an assertion of his own superiority to the wishful deceptions of fallible humanity.<sup>7</sup>





Chapter Two

Aesthetic Appeal in  
Preface to Shakespeare

It is commonplace to speak of Johnson's unmatched verbal and literal qualifications to edit Shakespeare, what with the Harleian catalogue, A Dictionary of the English Language, his knowledge of the technical process of publication, and the canon of his moral writings to his credit. There exists an especial affinity between the lexicographer whose Dictionary constitutes an original contribution to the language, and Shakespeare, "one of the original masters of our language."<sup>1</sup> Further, Johnson, like Shakespeare, first "came to London a needy adventurer, and lived for a time by very mean employments."<sup>2</sup> And Johnson, himself plagued by indolence, perceives that Shakespeare is lacking in diligence: "he sacrifices virtue to convenience."<sup>3</sup> A more explicit and most significant link between the Augustan lexicographer, critic, and editor and the Elizabethan dramatist is Johnson's representation of "psychological scenarios" throughout the Preface to Shakespeare: Johnson's verbal structures are, like Shakespeare's drama, "the mirror of manners and of life."<sup>4</sup> Johnson's Preface is a self-conscious creation of dramatic communication, in which aesthetic value is linked to ethical principle through the medium of psychological experience.

The creative, biographical and temperamental correlations between Johnson and Shakespeare are complemented by Johnson's expression of relations between himself and other critics, himself and other editors, and between his own contemporary drama and that of Shakespeare. Just as Johnson compares Shakespeare's dramatic achievements with those of his age,<sup>5</sup> so he compares his own critical and editorial merits, his



aesthetic and ethical qualities, with those of his predecessors. Johnson portrays universal traits through specific characters, so that Shakespeare, Voltaire, Heath, Edwards, Upton, and even he himself emerge both as individuals and as species.

Johnson perceives that the fundamental qualities of human nature are shared; on the other hand, the nature of human achievement, specifically, literary endeavor, is highly relative. The existence of a disparity between the absolute properties of human nature and the relativity of aesthetic and scholarly value means that art, criticism and editing are an index of morality. When Johnson criticizes the use of language and literary composition, he points to moral issues. His own use of language dramatizes the psychological realities which contend with those issues.

The extraordinary grammatical arrangement of the opening lines of the Preface to Shakespeare activates the reader's critical judgement while affecting the reader's moral perspective:

That praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity, is a complaint likely to be always continued by those, who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox; or those, who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy, will be at last bestowed by time.<sup>6</sup>

The reader is immediately involved in criticism; in evaluating and judging what is proposed in the initial noun clause subjects: people unreasonably admire only what is past, and are too unreasoningly pedantic to respect those who are living, or what is modern; and, conversely, just criticism emerges over time. Because the referential subject



is delayed, the reader first considers these propositions apart from their context as a "complaint." The reader's perspective widens, however, as the limited perspective of those complaining is revealed: there is a discrepancy between the independent meaning of the "complaint" and the intended meaning of the complainers. The "complaint" is a response voiced by two kinds of people to a common predicament: both desire to be esteemed. The self-seeking, self-justifying use of language by Johnson's characters ironically establishes that they are guilty of the unreliable and prejudiced perspective about which they complain. That is, Johnson's syntax allows the same words to express what is general, and has "the stability of truth,"<sup>7</sup> and to represent the futility of language used for self-serving, particular ends. Johnson is typical of eighteenth-century ironists like Pope and Swift in this demonstration that words have a life of their own, and that their real meaning can be discerned by reasonable, critical apprehension. At the same time, Johnson's characters are "types" which, like the "complaint" he reproduces, are "likely to be always" with us: human nature, and its attendant moral predicaments, persist. It is this dramatic presentation of psychological experience for which Johnson praises Shakespeare: his characters "are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find."<sup>8</sup>

The "complaint" consists of two generalizations which are syntactically parallel and thematically related: "that praises without reason are lavished on the dead" is linked to "that honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity . . . ." The positioning and repetition of the subordinating conjunction "that," and the positioning of diction with a high degree of correspondence, including the nouns "praises" and





"honours," the prepositional phrases "on the dead" and "to antiquity," which have as their objects collective nouns, and the main verbs "lavished" and "paid," associate two related contexts. However, a simple equivalence of meaning between these two axiomatic declarations is illusory. While the statements express that the unthinking compliance to the tradition of eulogy is comparable to the unthinking conformity to conventional homage, they also point to the distinction between the charitable response to the shared destiny of death, and the exactitude of critical enquiry. As Johnson observes in Rambler 155, flattery is a present, whereas just praise is a debt.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, there is a movement from undeserved "praises" to automatic "honours." On the other hand, the verb "lavished" in the first clause signifies a prodigal use of language, while "due" and "paid" in the second clause signify precision.

In the final two subordinate clauses, the character types attempt to evade recognition of their deficiencies. In the first of these subordinate clauses, the terseness of the participial phrase is reciprocated by the epigrammatic quality of the predicate clause: "by those, who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox." This expression may be described as a "psychological theorem:" it is a generalization which has the force of a principle of the working of the human mind. There is a movement from the declaration, in the participial phrase, of a fact of ability, to the description in the predicate clause of a resolute desire for esteem notwithstanding, and a consequent unscrupulous use of language: these complainers distort language to distort the reality of their lack of true perspicacity. Johnson's terse and witty description parodies the dismissive, flippant



wit of those he describes. His expression, however, also points to the lack of moral consciousness inherent in their verbal licence. The word "paradox" signifies a self-contradictory statement; or, what is inconsistent with common experience. The religious connotation of "truth" and "heresies" -- heresies are inconsistent with the one and absolute truth -- evoke the insidiousness of an expedient, false use of language.

The character type described in the final subordinate clause is also aspiring to recognition, but is wishful rather than morally perverse:

those, who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy, will be at last bestowed by time.

The two contrasting elements in the participial phrase are transmuted into antithetical elements in the two succeeding predicate clauses. That is, there is a movement from immediate, internal psychological constraint, to a projection of will on the part of others, to, finally, an opposition between the spitefulness of contemporaries and the justice of "time." This movement is facilitated by the chiasmic syntax of the three clauses. That is, the antithetical referents in the participial phrase are roughly paralleled in each of the following two predicate clauses. The first predicate clause reverses the order of the elements in the participial phrase, and the second predicate clause reverts to the order of the participial phrase:

being forced by disappointment [A] upon consolatory expedients [B], are willing to hope from posterity[B'] what the present age refuses [A'], and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy [A"], will be at last bestowed by time [B"].





This structural arrangement of juxtaposition and analogy dramatizes the fluidity of the psychological process as it moves from "disappointment," the defeat of expectation, to the complacent belief that "regard . . . will be at last bestowed by time:" those who receive no praise simply "flatter themselves." However, while the "regard . . . by time" may take the form of "honours due only to excellence," it may also be merely those "praises lavished without reason upon the dead." The confident resolution of "disappointment," that is, may well be illusory. In this trenchant description of the fluctuating self-awareness of the psyche Johnson communicates superbly an aspect of common human experience.

Johnson's accomplishment in this opening sentence is paradigmatic of his fundamental critical principle: if a work is clear-sighted, it will please by instructing, and instruct by pleasing; that is, "the mind can only repose on the stability of truth."<sup>10</sup> Johnson in the Preface to Shakespeare does indeed have something to "add to truth:" he possesses psychological acuity, linguistic genius, and has a keen moral sense. He is, therefore, a masterful critic of language. He ably passes judgement, not only on Shakespeare, but on critics and editors as well: "it takes one to know one," and Johnson knows them all.

Johnson's critical analysis of Shakespeare is remarkable for its comprehensiveness: he considers Shakespeare's work from historical, aesthetic, and textual perspectives. He at the same time maintains a critical debate with the neoclassical school, most particularly with Voltaire: very simply, Johnson argues that, while the likes of Voltaire demand that dramatic structure be consistent with Aristotelean tenets, dramatic imitation must be consistent with psychological truth. Johnson reprehends the separation of experience from evaluation,



which is, in essence, the failure to acknowledge the Lockean construct of a relationship between perception and reflection. Johnson's psychological understanding of language allows him to transcend any literal-minded acceptance of genre: Johnson focuses, not on the formal unities of time and place, but on the unity of art with experience. Johnson's own use of language fuses rational and psychological truth. The didacticism of theoreticians of drama is countered with the creation of a dramatic process of imaginative projection into the experience of Shakespeare. Whereas neoclassicists peremptorily and pedantically repudiate the great "poet of nature,"<sup>11</sup> Johnson, as a true critic, and a great writer in his own right, recognizes, points to, and demonstrates a language which creates meaning and being.

W. Jackson Bate observes that "in the Preface we have the encounter of one great experiencing nature with another:"<sup>12</sup> indeed, Johnson imaginatively yet convincingly recreates Shakespeare's very human consciousness. For instance, in a three-sentence paragraph describing the displeasing aesthetic result of Shakespeare's lack of diligence, Johnson cogently explains a formal deficiency in terms of a common psychological experience:

It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour, to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigourously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.<sup>13</sup>

Johnson's prose is mimetic of Shakespeare's predicament, his choice, and even of his consequently flawed dramatic legacy. Johnson suggests that the flaw in Shakespeare's dramatic structure is attributable, not to technical ignorance or critical heterodoxy, but to an impetuous, acquisitive, human nature.



Johnson believes that dramatic experience and the theory of drama must be dialectically related: he censures the critic who "assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position, which while his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false."<sup>14</sup> Significantly, the first sentence of this paragraph ("It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected") appeals to the conviction of experience and depends upon empirical evidence in the expression of a conclusive judgement. Indeed, Johnson orders his syntax to describe his proposition about Shakespeare's endings "scientifically." Johnson subordinates the topic of the paragraph, "the latter part of the plays" and their evident neglect, to the expression, in the independent clause, of the method upon which his argument is to proceed: "It may be observed . . . ." The activity of observing is not brought into relation to a definite subject: by the use of the passive verb construction and the placement of the impersonal object of the observation, "it," at the beginning of the sentence, Johnson calls attention to the activity itself. The auxiliary verb "may" suggests that the observation is tentative, provisional, and of the nature of an experiment. The main verb "observed" refers to a conscious seeing, as of a spectator of a drama; and, to a scientific ascertainment, as of a critical scrutiny.

Johnson does not unqualifiedly declare Shakespeare's short-coming: the burden of proof rests upon Johnson as the critic, and the reader is to be persuaded by his critical exposition. The adverbial element "in many of his plays" proffers the evidence of observation: a comparison of Shakespeare's plays furnishes proof of neglect. The adverb "evidently" contributes to the indictment: it refers to that which is apparent to the





vision and the understanding; to the spectator of the drama and to the editorial critic. However, this adverb, together with the modal auxiliary verb "may" and the passive constructions, have deflective force: the assertiveness of the speaker is diminished.

In the relative clause, as in the independent clause, Johnson's Latinate construction gives the passive verb the naturally emphatic position. The contrary activities denoted by the verbs "observed" and "neglected" point to the quality of aesthetic experience: the critical spectator must observe what the negligent artist constructs. Further, the use of the modal in "it may be observed" suggests an oblique challenge to "observe, if you choose." Johnson demonstrates an inductive critical method to counter the deductive, theoretical approach of the French critical school.

In the following sentence, Johnson portrays the motivation and choice which explains Shakespeare's failure to apply his whole mind and attention to the "latter part" of his plays: "When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour, to snatch the profit." The syntax "buries" the subject clause "he shortened the labour." Johnson is more interested to evoke the temper of Shakespeare's mind -- that is, to provide a context for his action -- than to dwell on the action itself. Indeed, the relative clause, introduced by the subordinating adverb of time "when," provides the setting, the time and the place, for the dramatic action of Shakespeare's choice. The phrases "found himself," "near the end," and "in view of" suggest the toil of a journey, and comprise an analogue of Shakespeare's beleaguered state. Further, the reflexive "found himself," besides denoting Shakespeare's self-perception, means (according



to the OED), "to provide for one's own living or needs," and so introduces the notion, developed in the rest of the sentence, of Shakespeare's material desire.

The final four units of the sentence, set off from each other by commas, can be viewed as two neat prose couplets:

near the end of his work,  
and in view of his reward,  
he shortened the labour,  
to snatch the profit.

The first couplet describes Shakespeare hesitating between toil and satisfaction; in the second couplet, Shakespeare gives in to weariness and desire. In the first couplet, "reward" is emphatic, because it is the only polysyllabic word; in the second, "snatch" is the only monosyllabic noun or verb. The transition from the potential "reward" to the substantial "profit" is that between an earned recompense and an expedient transaction.

Johnson means to delineate here an easily imagined, because commonly experienced, predicament or temptation. However, the specific context of weariness of the drudgery of literary composition, and the coincident anticipation of monetary (the sequence of the nouns, "work," "reward," "labour," and "profit," expresses the relation between employment and remuneration) as well as psychological gratification, also constitutes a significant parallel between the impatient and materially anxious playwright and the indolent and penurious critic. Johnson well comprehends psychological and material vulnerability. If he mirrors Shakespeare's mind, he sees his own reflection. Yet though he sympathetically represents Shakespeare's predicament, he with a single, sharp word -- the verb "snatch" -- defines his moral censure of Shakespeare's impulsive yet calculating, expedient but unvirtuous choice.





Shakespeare's failure is attributable, not to his omission of the Aristotelean unities, but to his impatience, a fault which may be comprehended by an extensive and sensitive knowledge of the human mind -- which Johnson possesses. Johnson accounts for the botched endings, and for the resultant disjunction between dramatic production and spectator, between the text and the critic. Shakespeare's laxity makes him a lesser communicator and to Johnson, observes Hagstrum, the end of art is communication.<sup>15</sup>

Having dramatized Shakespeare's yielding to temptation, Johnson goes on to articulate Shakespeare's aesthetic failure: "He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigourously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented." Johnson in this final sentence of the paragraph criticizes Shakespeare's faulty endings by means of referential and phonetic techniques which ironically exemplify the energy and force necessary to a pleasing performance, and then which are ironically mimetic of Shakespeare's slipshod endings. The first independent clause, "he remits his efforts," is analogous to the subject clause of the previous sentence, "he shortened the labour." The emphatic, declarative form of the description of Shakespeare's lassitude is congruent with the forceful, trenchant movement of the words in the adverbial clause, "where he should most vigourously exert them." "Should" is expressive of moral obligation, and of authority on the critic's part; the superlative "most vigourously" intensifies the impression of compulsion. In the phrase "vigourously exert," the assonant quality of the "g" sound (that is, "vigourously [eg-zert]") and of the "v" and the "z" sound distinguish the words so that the clause echoes the vehement declamation of a character in a closing dramatic



scene and, as well, appropriately voices Johnson's censure: the words exemplify the vigorous exertion necessary to complete a drama successfully.

The co-ordinate clause, on the other hand, describes the actual effect of the remitted effort: "his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented." The highly alliterative diction of the predicate elements creates the impression of haste and confusion evident in a hurry-scurry production. The contrast between the markedly precise emphasis in the adverbial clause and the jumble of sounds in the final independent clause is that between a considered and an irresponsible use of language.

W. Jackson Bate remarks that Johnson had "a perceptive insight into the psychology of editors themselves, enabling him time and again to avoid the pitfalls that editors can dig for themselves as well as each other."<sup>16</sup> Johnson is particularly impatient of critical jealousy; he wryly comments that he is disturbed "to observe how much paper is wasted in confutation." Envious, spurious controversy is a peculiarly professional hazard which obscures the educative purpose of criticism: "the human mind is kept in motion without progress."<sup>17</sup> Johnson's treatment of Thomas Edwards and Benjamin Heath satirizes self-involved controversy, and reveals Johnson as a morally educative, exemplary critic:

Dr. Warburton had a name sufficient to confer celebrity on those who could exalt themselves into antagonists, and his notes have raised a clamour too loud to be distinct. His chief assailants are the authors of The Canons of Criticism and of the Revisal of Shakespeare's Text; of whom one ridicules his errors with airy petulance, suitable enough to the levity of the controversy; the other attacks them with gloomy malignity, as if he were dragging to justice an assassin or incendiary. The one stings like a fly, sucks a little blood, takes a gay flutter, and returns for more; the other bites like a



viper, and would be glad to leave inflammations and gangrene behind him. When I think on one, with his confederates, I remember the danger of Coriolanus, who was afraid that "girls with spits, and boys with stones, would slay him in puny battle," when the other crosses my imagination, I remember the prodigy in Macbeth,

A falcon tow'ring in his pride of place  
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.<sup>18</sup>

Johnson incisively describes the envious ambition of these critics, parodies their intemperate and vindictive language, and accelerates the ridicule to a pitch of hilarity in the simile of the beasts. He then archly reduces these Shakespearean critics with pungent quotations from Shakespeare.

By means of ill-considered, extravagant writings on the editorial remarks of Warburton, Edwards and Heath endeavor to "exalt themselves;" Johnson reduces their attempts by ironically developing the literal meaning of "exalt." Edwards demonstrates the "airy petulance, suitable enough to the levity of the controversy . . . ." [my italics]. This pun is extended so that the arrogant, intellectual "lightweight" is compared by Johnson to "a fly." Heath's opportunism in attempting to gain esteem is also thwarted by the operation of a pun and a simile: in attacking "with gloomy malignity, as if he were dragging to justice an assassin or incendiary," the critic is "like a viper;" (my italics) not exalted, but debased. Johnson's apt conjoining of his comically felicitous similes with Shakespeare's brilliant metaphors impressively reveals his own perspicacious judgement, his proper sense of occasion, and his stylistic virtuosity -- the sort of genius which is, like Shakespeare's, publicly accessible and commonly useful. The repeated subject and predicate "I remember" in the final sentence signifies that Johnson, unlike Edwards and Heath, is affected by Shakespeare's interpretation of





experience; that he is a critical reader of the primary subject of the Shakespearean editor. Further, if the object of the editor is to elucidate Shakespeare's meaning, then Johnson's display of grammatical skill, in contrast to the stylistic ineptitude of Edwards and Heath, enacts an understanding of the language which is the true basis of a fine Shakespearean editor.

Johnson's attack on Edwards and Heath is not ad hominem. The use of the quotations makes clear that he is not impugning character, but practice. Johnson stresses through his Shakespearean allusion that attacks of minor critics on a greater one, like the assaults of girls and boys on a general, and owls on hawks, are audacious, unnatural, and needless. In the climactic, bathetic final words of the paragraph, in particular, "Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd," the juxtaposition in "owl hawk'd" stresses the perversity of such impersonation. Jealous aspirations lead critics to perverse excesses.

Edwards and Heath are introduced as individuals in a specific context, but are transformed by Johnson's bathos into general types in a universal context. The verbal brutality of these critics debases them so that they are morally like to a "fly" and a "viper." But they have not the stinging or poisoning powers of these beasts. Johnson's language, however, is performative: his moral ideas are executed in his writing; his satire is meant to correct the critic's lack of perspective.

The sober evaluation of Heath and Edwards expressed in the following paragraph is not a capitulation of Johnson's censure of their extravagant, unreasonable reaction to, of all things, Warburton's editorial notes; rather, as even the first two sentences of the paragraph indicate, Johnson shifts to a matter-of-fact, restrained deliberation of their



ultimate value as critics: "Let me however do them justice. One is a wit, and one is a scholar." In the first sentence, Johnson with the word "however" suggests that the immediately previous satiric treatment is as just as the present one. He in this hortative sentence also stresses an invidious distinction between "me" and "them:" unlike "them," Johnson has the verbal felicity and the intellectual power to make critical mincemeat out of his colleagues; however, also unlike "them," he has the self-control and the sense of humour to behave with rectitude.

In the second, compound sentence, the syntactical and verbal parallelism emphasizes the subjects "wit" and "scholar," and thereby emphasizes the distinction between them. This recalls Johnson's comparison of Pope, who is perceptive but impatient, and Theobald, who is fastidious in detail, but lacking the faculty to elucidate meaning. Johnson exemplifies a resolution of scholarship and wit: his performance entertains, and teaches.

In the following paragraph, Upton is criticized for his tendency to make emendations on presumptive evidence. Johnson closes the paragraph with an overstated generalization which ridicules the propensity of editors to deduce systems from unrelated particulars, and which testifies to his own contrasting practice of proceeding from observation to principle: "Every cold empirick, when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist, and the laborious collator at some unlucky moment frolicks in conjecture."<sup>19</sup> The two independent clauses are grammatically and thematically analogous. The specious conversion of discrete fact to speculative theory is related to grotesque physical and mental transformations. The subject of each clause is



generalized: in "every cold empirick," the demonstrative adjective "every" is inclusive; in "the laborious collator," the definite article attributes to the noun representative status. The adverbial clause in the first main clause and the adverbial prepositional phrase in the second main clause qualify the circumstances of transformation. The predicate clauses describe two events: each is affected by conditions seemingly beyond human control. However, Johnson's analysis is by no means perfunctory or simple-minded. His moral conclusion -- that single-mindedness is dangerous, and precludes scholarly dignity -- is expressively implied.

Just as Johnson dismisses neoclassical deductive criticism, so he censures the deductive editorial process. He ironically assumes a scientific, inductive mode as he remarks the way in which activity based on narrow, unsubstantiated principles is dehumanizing: "Every cold empirick, when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist . . . ." The empiricists react mechanically to inward psychological forces as physical matter does to outward forces: the adjective "cold" signifies that the subject is unenlivened and unemotional; the word also facilitates the satiric metaphor of a scientifically demonstrable chemical process. That is, the passive form of the adverbial clause ("when his heart is expanded by a successful experiment") expresses that the "cold empirick" is acted upon; the "experiment" is the agent by which "his heart is expanded." In the predicate clause, "swells" refers to an increase, not in substance, but in volume: partial evidence is inflated to an entire system.

The "laborious collator" subjects himself to a different sort of dehumanization; to an unaccountable, unfortunate aberration of the





mind: "the laborious collator at some unlucky moment frolicks in conjecture." Once again, the failure to consider the relation of parts to wholes, to perceive the relative disposition of parts, ends in temperamental and intellectual instability. The staid pedant is impelled without warning to abandon his toilsome labour, and to caper about in a mad folly. Indeed, the prepositional phrase "in conjecture" suggests the circumstance of place; of actual removal from one situation to another.

The reader senses, in Johnson's catalogue of the merits and faults of past editors, his weariness and impatience with their foibles, quirks, ignorance, and occasional viciousness: these he combats with a witty rhetoric informed by a sure sense of the working of the editor's mind; of the complexion of the editor's mental life. In short, Johnson secures for examination the continuous processes of the human psyche.

The Preface to Shakespeare is a work of criticism, and Johnson does indeed rank aspects of the performances and the worth of dramatists, critics, and editors. As Morris Golden suggests, Johnson passes beyond Locke's epistemology in his belief that "While the tablets of the mind might have been clean at birth, they varied enormously in size."<sup>20</sup> However, Johnson also makes it clear that all the literary figures he examines, including Shakespeare, are bound together by the desire to gain fame and self-gratifying recognition through the pursuit of professional activity. In a sense, then, the two complaining, ambitious character types described in the opening sentence of the Preface are metaphoric of Johnson's unifying thematic interest in this work. Playwrights, critics, and editors all manifest undignified actions and deluded hopes in the attempt to fulfill their self-interest. Johnson, in



at once creating sympathy and fostering moral judgement within the reader for those he represents, grounds the reader in a reasonable examination of the literary subject at hand, and the equally important consideration of the internal fancies and appetites which affect every person in every endeavour. In effect, Johnson creates the aesthetic experience which he endorses within his Preface: he engages the feelings and the intellect in a consideration of psychological experience. As W. Jackson Bate remarks, "The Preface is one of the great classical affirmations of the highest uses of literature."<sup>21</sup>

Johnson's style, in what Bate calls "the drama of his literary criticism,"<sup>22</sup> enacts the comedy and the pathos of the attempt to gratify imaginative desire. Johnson's voice, his narrative presence, counteracts the folly, while it affirms the real, inescapable dangers, of the literary world in particular, and the human career in general. Because he himself, in an exemplary fashion, runs the whole gamut of literary endeavor, being at once a creative writer, a critic, an editor, and a grammarian, he is a comparative model of those professions. As a supremely self-conscious instructor and entertainer, he is representative of the wise and ethical being.



### Chapter Three

#### Ethical Appeal in

#### Ramblers 170-171

John B. Radner, in discussing Johnson's notion of sympathy, remarks that Johnson "asks those who judge and condemn hastily to imagine themselves in the original situation of the unfortunate and to consider whether they would have lived any differently. And sometimes, as in the letters Misella the prostitute writes to the Rambler (Numbers 170-171), he makes this process quite easy for readers."<sup>1</sup> To clarify Johnson's creation of imaginative sympathy in Misella's narration, and, further, to clarify the way in which this imaginative experience is to galvanize the reader to moral judgement of the prostitute, her society, and therefore, of the self in society, an examination of thematic similarities between these Ramblers and Hogarth's A Harlot's Progress is, for introductory purposes at least, useful. That is, the ironic strategy of Johnson's prose narrative becomes particularly apparent when it is related to the ironic pattern of Hogarth's pictorial narrative. Johnson himself, as Jean H. Hagstrum points out, approves of "that most empirical of all critical techniques, comparison."<sup>2</sup>

The desire of each artist to initiate moral and political change within English society is suggested by their involvement in the exposure and interpretation of biographical sources. The sociological reality of the relation between brutal deception and prostitution is reflected by each artist in the derivation of their subjects, their protagonists, from real life. Hogarth's Harlot "was no fictional character, but a contemporary prostitute, whose name many readers would have remembered, and she was surrounded [in Plate 1] by a recognizable bawd, rapist,





magistrate and probably clergyman from the London of the 1730's."<sup>3</sup> And "according to Malone, the story of Misella in Nos 170-71 was formed . . . 'from a history of one of these [unfortunate women of the streets], which a girl told under a tree in the King's Bench walk in the Temple to Baretti and Johnson . . .'"<sup>4</sup> The grounding of their art in this particular aspect of contemporary London society suggests the intent of Hogarth and Johnson to invest the eighteenth-century experience with moral meaning; the documentary basis of each work signifies a shared concern with social reform.

The schematic representation of Hogarth's engravings and of Johnson's prose depict the plight of the vulnerable child-woman. The Harlot and Misella are punished by the crimes of others. However, although the Harlot and Misella are represented as victims of the sordid, selfish impulses of others, their portraitures are highly unsentimental. The fallen world around them is reflected in their own fallen natures. In Hogarth, the young woman does not transcend, but participates in the pretension of those around her -- and she is finally unduly and hypocritically punished for her imitation. As Ronald Paulson observes of the final four of Hogarth's six engravings, "the Harlot's affectation brings her punishment far in excess of her crime; in Hogarth's society the respectable people . . . are both models for such as the Harlot and her judge and executioner."<sup>5</sup> In Plate 5, the reader witnesses the Harlot's end. She has been, in effect, condemned by a guilty and unfeeling society to a pitiable, unjustifiable death in pain and squalor. The reader, on examining the sixth engraving, reacts to the self-absorbed, simpering "mourners" at her funeral, and is implicitly challenged to self-examination in the more significant, introspective sense. Misella,



on the other hand, is very aware of, and indeed draws our attention to, the hypocritical cruelty and impiety of those around her. Yet, she is driven to propose a model of her own treatment which reflects that very cruelty when she suggests her own banishment as a social and personal ideal:

It is said that in France they annually evacuate their streets, and ship their prostitutes and vagabonds to their colonies . . . For my part I should exult at the privilege of banishment, and think myself happy in any region that should restore me once again to honesty and peace. (p. 145)

The irony inherent in this near-Swiftian "modest proposal" has didactic efficacy: that is, Misella's ingenuous appeal to mechanical expedience and uncharitable impulses appeals to that which society is trying to displace: reason, compassion, mercy, and charity.<sup>6</sup>

In each of these studies, then, the poignance of the characters of the prostitutes is heightened by their inevitable sharing of the distorted, unhealthy values of their society. The reading structures of the stories of the Harlot and Misella involve the reader in a sympathetic experience which is meant to enhance the reader's scope insofar as the reader, as a member of society, is given pause to examine his or her own values. The reader is expected to have an imaginative capacity, and therefore to compassionate the poor prostitute. Being also a reasonable creature, the reader is expected to judge those aspects of the human character which contribute to her downfall, and of a society which denies her freedom of action. The reader is above all else a religious being, and consequently is directed to an emotional and moral response to suffering and wickedness, to a lack of intellectual or moral determination. As the relation of the prostitute's existence progresses, the role of



the reader shifts from that of observer, to emotional participant, to moral actor.

A Harlot's Progress and Misella's letters examine the relationship between private motivation and public action: both works convey that the private and public hearts are complementary in form and function. Each separate frame of Hogarth's narrative sequence portrays the relation between the vicious hypocrisy of those in the Harlot's society and the callousness of the church, the law, and the medical profession in their dealings with her. The inhuman predaciousness of Misella's guardian is paralleled in the travesty of guardianship exhibited by her irresponsible and heartless landlady, employers, brothel-keepers and illicit lovers, and is ironically reflected in her asocial plea for banishment.

The Harlot and Misella are coerced into self-destruction; they share a social penchant for escapism. In Plate 3, a magistrate enters the Harlot's "shabby chamber in Drury Lane . . . to arrest her for prostitution."<sup>7</sup> Hanging on her bedside wall is a picture of "Cap. Mackheath,"<sup>8</sup> the mock-heroic rake of "The Beggar's Opera." The escape of this fictional character from imprisonment and death is in ironic conflict with the reality of the heroine's consequent experience. In the final paragraph of Rambler 171, a desperate Misella touts the perilous journey to unknown, unsettled lands as though it were a return to the Edenic state: "For my part I should exult at the privilege of banishment, and think myself happy in any region that should restore me once again to honesty and peace." (p. 145) This false sense of self-preservation reflects society's perverse sense of communal preservation as it tends to purge itself of its helpless victims. However, if, as Johnson





contends in Rambler 56, "the great end of society is mutual beneficence,"<sup>9</sup> and, as Boswell reports him saying, "It is our first duty to serve society, and, after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls,"<sup>10</sup> then the reader is compelled from introspection to political action; or, to Christian charity for those in distress.

Hogarth and Johnson portray the tragedy of the inverted expectations of their "heroines." In Plate 1 of A Harlot's Progress, the hopeful young woman, newly arrived in London from the country, is about to be duped by a bawd and a lecher. Further, the Harlot "from the second to the final plate . . . is in rooms that are ever more closed and confining."<sup>11</sup> Misella begins a new life as a child "transported to splendid apartments, and a luxurious table," (p. 136) only to end virtually begging to be transported to the colonies as a criminal. She undergoes a progressive economic, psychological, and moral constraint as she is degraded from an innocent child to social vermin: she describes the ghastly state of "wretches" (p. 144) such as herself, and includes herself among "the women that infest this city . . ." (p. 145; my italics). Each progress begins as a quest for happiness, a pilgrimage of self-fulfillment, but concludes as an inescapable journey toward misery, obscurity, and alienation. The convincing picture of these women as economic commodities rendered especially vulnerable by their social and economic dependence affects twentieth-century sensibilities in a very specific sense. But the eighteenth-century didactic intent of Hogarth and Johnson is very much a humanistic response to social evil: the reader is to be no passive observer, but is to cultivate a loving heart, a capacity for shrewd self-judgement, and an active virtue.



The prostitutes depicted by Hogarth and Johnson resist typification: the Harlot and Misella are neither caricatured whores, nor are they idealized as spiritual madonnas. Rather, they exhibit psychological and social characteristics common to all complex social beings. The reader of both Hogarth's art and Johnson's prose is given a comprehensive view of a condition of women which infects society. However, where Hogarth's engravings communicate by patterns of lines, colours, and shapes, by ironies which emerge from the complexity of visual detail, Johnson's prose, though lacking intimate personal details, provides structural irony and patterns of verbal irony, and grammatical structures which provide analogies of Misella's psychological processes, and the writer's ethical principles.

In Rambler 170, Misella's lack of freedom causes her humiliation, distress, and, ultimately, social ruin. In Rambler 171, she continues not to be allowed to exercise her own will; her suffering is exacerbated by the withholding of forgiveness and charity by society. The contrast between the epigraphs of the Ramblers marks a shift between the hope of acceptance, and the desperation to be recognized:

I grant the charge; forgive the fault confess'd. (p. 135)

Dark is the sun, and loathsome is the day. (p. 140)

The contrast between Misella's eloquent and poignant autobiography and her final appeal for transportation is evidence that she conceives of no means of freedom of action within society.

Misella, first innocent, then penitent, is forced into the life of a reprobate. Johnson affirms that Misella's suffering is not divinely predetermined, but is inflicted by humanity. In her initial letter, the fundamental injustice of the tragic process of her life is under-



scored by an insinuated contrast between the reality of her experience and the harsh doctrine of predestination. The original beginnings of her fallen condition as a prostitute lie in a social structure which, as Sherry O'Donnell points out, rewards feminine charm -- that is, female compliance -- with economic status; with money.<sup>12</sup> When a wealthy male cousin offers to take a child off the hands of Misella's financially burdened parents, Misella with her siblings "passes in review before him, that he may make his choice." (p. 136) The ten-year old Misella, having compliantly paraded before the rich man her charming little accomplishments, is chosen. Misella relates her parents' well-meaning but misguided decision to put her in the care of this "wealthy relation:" (p. 135)

Distress on one side and ambition on the other, were too powerful for parental fondness . . . My parents felt the common struggles at the thought of parting, and "some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon." (p. 136)

The mother and father trade their beloved daughter for the consideration of her material comfort. Johnson insinuates by means of the quotation from Milton that the parental grief is too easily assuaged. Ironically, Milton in this line alludes to the notion of the self-willed Fall as being also the Fortunate Fall. Of course, Misella is doomed to the most unfortunate and hopeless status of Fallen Woman. The juxtaposition between Milton's Adam and Eve, humanity's original parents, undergoing banishment from the Garden of Eden and the separation of the child Misella (certainly no Cain) from her parents is ironic. Adam and Eve go forward, as these parents send their daughter forward, not wholly disconsolate, but comforted by a Promise. However, the "wealthy relation" is a false benefactor, and a false deliverer: Misella leaves her





original home to enter a world in which she not only suffers the pains of childbirth, but a veritable hell of an existence.

There is in Rambler 170 a pattern, not of the cosmic process of falling and rising, but of the natural, cyclical process of rising and falling: Her parents considered "that I was raised to a higher rank than they could give me . . . I was transported to splendid apartments . . ." (p. 136; my italics). This paradise is illusory. As Misella matures, she "was thrown upon dependance without resource . . . I was insensibly degraded from my equality . . . I felt every indignity, but knew that resentment would precipitate my fall . . . my interest, notwithstanding this expedient [of patience and submissiveness] hourly declined . . . I was now completely depressed . . ." (p. 137; my italics). Her guardian, however, promises her a felicitous restoration to a social position which is not, ironically, originally hers: he "bid me . . . assume the place which he always intended me to hold in the family." (p. 138) After she has been violated, she is promised restoration to a state of innocence which is no longer real: "Our crime had its usual consequence . . . He comforted me with hopes of eluding all discovery . . ." (p. 139) His blandishments are false; his "hiding in the Garden," as it were, is hypocritical.

Tormented by her undignified domestic position, Misella wonders "by what means I might escape from perpetual mortification." (p. 137) Her calculating guardian intercedes to placate, then to ruin her. However, women like Misella, unlike Milton's Eve, are not partners in temptation; rather, they are victims of coercion:

Many of the beings which are now rioting in taverns, or shivering in the streets, have been corrupted not by arts of gallantry which stole gradually upon the affections and laid prudence asleep, but by the fear of losing benefits



which were never intended, or of incurring resentment which they could not escape; some have been frightened by masters, and some awed by guardians into ruin. (p. 139)

Sherry O'Donnell aptly observes of this passage that such an "analysis of sexual conquest, born out of Misella's personal history, shows how economic dependence makes women the victims of male power and privilege."<sup>13</sup> At the same time, such women are condemned by "the sentimental myth of libertine 'gallantry' and maidenly coquetry,"<sup>14</sup> as well as by the religious myth of the temptress Eve, to social disapprobation and persecution. Society, in its complacent stereotyping of experience, fails to attend to the reality of things.

Misella's curiously liturgical diction in Rambler 171 has an ironic effect: it emphasizes society's betrayal of Misella's trust, her faith, in its obligation to sustain her. She recalls her hypocritical cousin's "protestations of everlasting regard" and his "promise to restore me." (p. 141) She is devastated when "all hopes of restoration to my former state were for ever precluded." (p. 142) Misella harasses her guardian with "perpetual solicitations." (p. 142) With her guardian she is "unwilling to supplicate for assistance;" (p. 142) with her landlady, she knew that "to supplicate obdurate brutality, was hopeless" (p. 143; my italics). She is "delivered" from her homeless poverty by a "keeper," (p. 144) as his mistress. By means of Misella's proposal at the end of the letter, Johnson casts reproach on society's denial of mercy; on the failure of the social relationship. That is, Misella, to escape her "abject state," and to ensure the "rescue" of "such numbers of human beings from a state so dreadful," begs that "prostitutes and vagabonds" be removed from their actual state of England to a colony: many of the



despairing poor "would gladly be delivered on any terms from the necessity of guilt . . ." (p. 145; my italics). Misella's liturgical expression satirizes society's failure to be charitable; it also poignantly reveals her naively misplaced faith in such a hypocritical society.

Misella's parents send her away to relieve her from the hardship of poverty. She in fact is the victim of tyranny and ill-usage in her new setting. Moreover, the experience of hopeful rising and horrid falling related in Rambler 170 degenerates, we find in the narration in Rambler 171, into a dismal oscillation between imprisonment and abandonment by false keepers -- by those who are the antithesis of their brother's keepers. In the second letter, Misella chronicles her movement to increasingly miserable shelters as she endures a sinister, unimpeded degradation from beloved daughter to reviled prostitute; from social being to social outcast. Further, her always thwarted desire to escape oppression and misery creates intense psychological suffering. On the discovery of Misella's pregnancy, ". . . I was removed to lodgings in a distant part of the town . . . Here being, by my circumstances, condemned to solitude, I passed most of my hours in bitterness and anguish." (p. 140) Although she is delivered of her child, she is not delivered from her imprisonment: "To escape, however, was not yet in my power . . . [he] forbore to release me from my confinement" (p. 141; my italics). When their crime is apparently discovered, she "was removed with a thousand studied precautions through by-ways and dark passages, to another house, where I harassed him with perpetual solicitations for a small annuity, that might





enable me to live in the country with obscurity and innocence." (p. 142) Ironically, it is Misella's seducer who escapes to the "obscurity and innocence" of the country: "he had quitted his house, and was gone with his family to reside for some time upon his estate in Ireland." (p. 143) His self-exile to a colony, his flight from Misella's misery and the danger of his own exposure, ironically presages her plea for banishment to the colonies to escape her own misery and shame. O'Donnell sardonically remarks that the guardian moves to his ". . . Irish estate, presumably to prey upon another common target of English lust, the Irish nation. A country, like a woman, may be 'colonized' into helplessness and self-hatred."<sup>15</sup>

When she has been abandoned by her lover, Misella is expelled from her lodging: "my landlady . . . led me to the door" and she is "obliged . . . to shelter myself in a covered passage. Next day, I procured a lodging in the backward garret of a mean house . . . ." (p. 143) However, when goods entrusted to her are stolen, she is "obliged to fly from a prosecution . . . Thus driven again into the streets, I . . . at night accommodated myself under pent-houses as well as I could." (p. 144) In the midst of this homeless exile, an "elderly man . . . seized me by the hand;" when he perceives that she is wretched, however, "he spurned me from him." (p. 144) She is maintained by another man, then "abandoned to my former condition, from which I was delivered by another keeper." (p. 144) Finally, Misella describes "the dismal receptacles to which the prostitute retires from her nocturnal excursions . . . ." (p. 144) At the beginning of Rambler 170, Misella's wistful parents unwittingly



yield her to dispossession; at the end of Rambler 171, the story comes full circle, in a sense, as an exhausted, distraught Misella argues to be even more radically dispossessed.

After her betrayal, Misella's cousin

mingled his assurances of protection and maintenance with menaces of total desertion, if in the moments of perturbation I should suffer his secret to escape, or endeavor to throw on him any of my infamy. (p. 139)

Misella hereafter is trapped into a never-ending conspiracy of hypocrisy, of withholding or disguising the truth. The high incidence in Rambler 171 of diction related to vision ironically points to the discrepancy between appearance and reality in Misella's social experience. Misella is "sometimes afraid lest" her cousin's "assiduity should expose him to suspicion." (p. 140) When her true feelings become apparent to him -- "he found me weeping . . . he at last found that I was more affected with the loss of my innocence, than the danger of my fame . . ." -- Misella is "exposed" to his "vulgar, empty, and fallacious" (p. 141) reasonings as he attempts to establish an ungodly sway over her: he "hides the light of reason," (p. 141) "betrays artifices of lewdness," and has only an "appearance of sorrow" (p. 142). When "chance had discovered" her "secret," her cousin urges that they "seek a retreat . . . where curiosity or hatred could never find us." (p. 142) Although Misella is forced to hide the consequence of her betrayal from her society she does not hide the implication of her actions from herself: while she retreats "under one of the characters commonly assumed upon such occasions," she does not "endeavor to conceal from my own mind the enormity of my crime." (p. 140) The people Misella encounters either acknowledge her to exploit her, or their



perception of her is determined by their abrupt, uncharitable response to the circumstance of her appearance. Her landlady "took an opportunity to search my boxes." (p. 143) She then turns the helpless, penniless Misella into the streets. To her prospective mistress, Misella "looked a thief" (p. 143). When the lecherous "elderly man . . . saw my face pale with hunger . . . he spurned me from him . . ." (p. 144) She is finally reduced to being "tricked up for sale by the mistress of a brothel" in the hope "of finding some whom folly or excess may expose to my allurements . . ." (p. 144; my italics). Misella, like her cousin, employs "artifices of lewdness" to "expose" (p. 144) others for their own gain. That she is less guilty than the likes of her cousin, because, unlike him, she has no freedom of choice, does not diminish her anguish.

Misella's response to her forced complicity is to be ashamed of her existence. When she is first abandoned to the streets, she is "afraid to meet an eye that had seen me before" (p. 143; my italics). She is intimidated by "the menaces of the watch" (p. 143; my italics). Finally, the reader is entreated by Misella to acknowledge the condition of the unfortunate; to

visit . . . and see the wretches that lie crowded together,  
                                           mad with intemperance,  
                                           ghastly with famine,  
                                           nauseous with filth,  
                                           and noisome with disease. (pp. 144-5;  
                                                                                           my italics)

The first two appositional adjective phrases focus on the condition of the sufferers; the last two focus on the impression the sufferers make on the visitor, the viewer. That is, Misella's concern shifts from the pitiable state of the wretched, to the disgust of the observer. This





indication of Misella's awareness of the prejudices of the upright, fastidious citizen is in keeping with her argument in the following and final paragraph of the letter. Based on her experiences, Misella's plea for physical and social recognition is accompanied with the incongruous suggestion that she be put out of sight; that she be exiled to the colonies. Misella remarks that

No place but a populous city can afford opportunities for open prostitution, and where the eye of justice can attend to individuals, those who cannot be made good may be restrained from mischief. (p. 145)

The reference to "the eye of justice" is most ironic: prostitutes are to be recognized only to be transported and punished. Misella believes that the pattern of her treatment by society should be perpetuated.

The structure of the letters, and their verbal patterns, reveal the tenor of Johnson's moral and political concerns, and provide a psychological insight into the experience of the persona. A detailed examination of grammatical structures enhances the reader's perception that Misella's convictions are sincere and her observations perspicacious, but that her perspective is false: she naturally deplores, but finally accedes to, the cruel and unjust treatment of herself by society. Misella in the end preaches what is practiced.

In the opening paragraph of Rambler 171, Misella proposes that her tale will be morally prescriptive:

I am convinced that nothing would more powerfully preserve youth from irregularity, or guard inexperience from seduction, than a just description of the condition into which the wanton plunges herself, and therefore hope that my letter may be a sufficient antidote to my example. (p. 140)



However, a false sense of self-determination is betrayed in her use of the reflexive "plunges herself." Misella's assertion is in conflict with the rhetorical crescendo of her previous letter, which insists on the helplessness of subservient women like herself, and with the consequent heart-breaking narrative of her history: Misella's attempts to repent and restore herself are frustrated at every turn. The letter's initial profession, then, constitutes a contradiction of her experience.

Moreover, by the use of the words "preserve" and "antidote," which together have medical and chemical connotations, Misella insinuates that she is proposing an elixir for "irregularity" and "seduction." But given the generality of these ailments described in the parallel noun clauses, the specificity of the treatment proposed in the correlative phrase "a just description of the condition into which the wanton plunges herself," is specious. Just as Misella in the end appeals not to "youth" or "inexperience," but to those who live in "plenty" and "security" (p. 144) and are empowered to take political action, so her "antidote" is not a protection of "youth" and "inexperience," but is a social purging, an evacuation, of herself.<sup>16</sup> That is, Misella's proposed intent and her actual conclusion are not rhetorically consistent, and, Johnson's persona employs figurative language in a too literal sense.

The initial three words of the sentence, the independent clause "I am convinced," acknowledges Misella's defeat and servility. The passive form of the verb directly supports the notion of Misella's passivity; that she has been coerced by, an unfeeling, hypocritical



society. Paradoxically, Misella explains the salvation of her society in terms of her own sacrifice. The liturgical resonance of "convinced," "preserve," "just," "hope," and "sufficient" constitutes an ironic, self-reflexive undercutting of the persona: she introduces herself, a young prostitute, as a social benefactor. The evil which she proposes to eradicate, is herself -- not just her "example," but her actual, physical self. The irony of this opening sentence is directed against the fervent delusion of Misella herself, and against the complacent, simple-minded enthusiast who perceives life's predicaments in a smug, formulaic way. The sentence, in effect, is parodic of the confessional form. The persona is not a model: the reader is to perform, to assess the persona, and to define him or herself with new principles.

Misella expresses outrage at her treatment, yet her statements reflect that she is inured to the ethical stance which permits such treatment. Her vulnerable unself-consciousness heightens the pathos of her predicament, and challenges the reader to acquire self-knowledge and to exhibit clarity. Misella's obvious purity of heart and her good intentions jar with lapses in sensibility; her rhetorical progress is flawed by erratic logic and an unwitting self-exposure:

I have heard of barbarians, who, when tempests drive ships upon their coast, decoy them to the rocks that they may plunder their lading, and have always thought that wretches thus merciless in their depredations, ought to be destroyed by a general insurrection of all social beings; yet how light is this guilt to the crime of him, who in the agitations of remorse cuts away the anchor of piety, and when he has drawn aside credulity from the paths of virtue, hides the light of heaven which would direct her to return. (p. 141)





The sentence is syllogistic: if barbarians commit wanton attacks, and wanton attackers should be killed, then barbarians should be killed. By analogy, then, if seducers attempt to corrupt the spirit, and the healthy spirit is civilizing, then corruptors of the spirit should be anathema to the civilized sensibility. If the reader is convinced that one who "cuts away the anchor of piety" is mad or malevolent, the reader will be impressed with the necessity to confront guilt.

The description in the first part of the sentence of "ships" and "barbarians" is ironic, in that it signifies Misella's awareness of the dangers of voyaging and the possibility of suffering harm from native peoples, yet she nonetheless wishes that the English would follow the example of the French and "annually ship their prostitutes to the colonies." (p. 145) More importantly, Johnson here provides a subliminal metaphor of Misella's experience of cruel deception, of rape. Her example, drawn from reports of remote events, provides an oblique insight into her personal helplessness, terror, and anger on being violated by one of that species of "wretches," of "reptiles," (p. 139) her cousin. She subsequently tells of her landlady, who "took the opportunity of my absence to search my boxes" and "seized" (p. 143) all of her clothing before turning her out. One of her "fellow-lodgers stole the lace" entrusted to her, and she is "obliged to fly a prosecution." (p. 144) An "elderly man . . . seized me by the hand." (p. 144) She is later taken up by one who "considered that I might be obtained at a cheap rate . . ." (p. 144) Misella is repeatedly persecuted for the sexual gratification or material gain



of another: her London society is characterized, as much as that of a group of barbarians, by selfishness, greed, and inhumanity. Misella refers in her description to the savagery and depravity of a wholly uncivilized people, while Johnson implies a second referent: the cunning and salaciousness of Misella's own self-serving society.

This sentence, like the opening sentence, begins with a personal pronoun and a passive verb construction ("I am convinced;" "I have heard"), signifying that once again Misella is assertive, yet under the governance of an external force. In the second independent clause ("[I] have always thought that wretches thus merciless in their depredations, ought to be destroyed by a general insurrection of all social beings"), Misella judges and passes sentence upon the actions of her barbarians. The adverb "always" intensifies the expression of an impassioned, but personal opinion: the shocking quality of her drastic proposition -- the destruction of peoples -- is consequently somewhat deflected. Misella's use of the absolutes "general" and "all" in the noun clause object creates a sense of overstatement: her understandable indignation takes an unreasonable form.

The auxiliary verb "ought," followed by the infinitive "to be," expresses the intensity and urgency of Misella's conviction that "all social beings" are bound by practical duty, moral laws, and conscience, to react to wickedness. Misella's persuasive attack on social inaction and unresponsiveness, however, is undercut. Her call for an "insurrection" betrays a lack of referential knowledge:



because an insurrection defines a mutiny on a ship at sea, or a civil or political uprising against established authority, her incitement of "all social beings" against "barbarians" is nonsensical. Moreover, Misella regards the "destruction" of uncivilized "barbarians" as an ultimately "social" action: she wishes to counter the actions of "wretches thus merciless in their deprecation" with annihilation. She advocates a strictly retributive justice which is, ironically, not civilizing. This reasoning anticipates her devastatingly anti-social solution at the end of the letter. Misella takes her example from the worst and basest of humanity -- both in this rhetorical context, for effect, and, necessarily, in her own limiting experience. She is not merciful, either in this hypothetical instance, nor, finally, to herself and those like her: she has suffered depravity, and further, has never had the opportunity to practice benevolence and charity.

Misella's expression reflects a sound rhetorical process of empirical observation, moral judgement, and practical conclusion. However, although her comprehension of the character of her predicament is shrewd, and her moral beliefs and feelings are sincere, her conclusions are suspect; they are lacking in strict reason and ultimate charity. Clearly, she has not herself benefited from the principle of active virtue, and she herself, though inwardly repentant, has been denied the opportunity of performing correction. Johnson suggests that Misella's knowledge and perception extend no further than her experience.

The second part of Misella's comparison is an interrogative





construction:

yet how light is this guilt to the crime of him, who in the agitations of remorse cuts away the anchor of piety, and when he has drawn aside credulity from the paths of virtue, hides the light of heaven which would direct her to return.

In posing this rhetorical question, Misella is at once deferential and intractably assertive. The movement from the first part of the sentence to the second is that from the external -- that is, the foreign, the physical realm -- to the internal, local, psychological realm. There are many figurative and grammatical parallelisms between these two parts. The "agitations of remorse" correspond to turbulent "tempests;" "cuts away the anchor of piety" and "paths of virtue" are infused with nautical meaning. ("Paths" can denote the imaginary line described by a moving ship.) The adverbial clause "when he has drawn aside credulity from the paths of virtue" is analogous to the action of barbarians who "decoy" ships "that they may plunder their lading."

The use of the accusative construction "the crime of him" (rather than, say, the possessive "his crime") places the object of the preposition "him" in the same grammatical position as the prepositional object "barbarians;" further, each is followed by a caesura, caused by the natural syntactical structure of the sentence, and is also followed by a relative clause introduced by the relative pronoun "who." The effect in each instance is to emphasize the perpetrator of evil. Moreover, the shift from the plural to the singular emphasizes the sex of the second sort of perpetrator. Significantly, the feminine pronoun in "the light of heaven which would direct her to return" fuses three referents: personified "credulity," a ship, and, a seduced woman.

"Light" is used as an adjective and a noun ("how light is this guilt;" "the light of heaven"). The cognate diction has sensory



referents in weight and vision, and a theological correspondence: the burden of sin and divine revelation. Misella describes in the first part of her statement a brutal, self-serving deceit; here, she focuses on a more profound deceit, or even self-deceit, which has as its end the carelessness of the very knowledge of sin; the prevention of the impulse to participate in the civilizing contemplation of one's actions.

The dreary horror of the prostitute's existence is poignantly and powerfully expressed:

In this abject state  
I have now passed four years,  
the drudge of extortion and  
the sport of drunkenness;  
sometimes the property of one man, and  
sometimes the common prey of accidental lewdness;  
at one time tricked up for sale by the mistress of a brothel,  
at another begging in the streets to be relieved from hunger  
by wickedness;  
without any hope in the day but of finding some whom folly  
or excess may expose to my allurements, and  
without any reflections at night, but such as guilt and  
terror impress upon me. (p. 144)

The dispassionate, authoritative tone signals that Johnson's own voice and pen are very near the surface here. The delayed subject clause confronts the reader immediately with the prepositional phrase "In this abject state." The antecedent of the demonstrative adjective "this" lies in the preceding sentence: "By this man I was maintained four months in penurious wickedness, and then abandoned to my former condition, from which I was delivered by another keeper." In the subject clause "I have now passed," the adverb "now" deftly stresses that those "four months" have become "four years." The withholding of the verb "passed" allows the direct object "four years" to emphatically conclude the sentence element; the emphasis is especially pronounced, because there is no expressed conjunction preceding the following adverbial



phrases.

The adverbial phrases comprise four pairs of antitheses -- or, rather, four comparisons which describe two aspects of the same predicament: the humiliating fluctuation between slavery and exile, between bondage and limbo. The first two of these phrases, "the drudge of extortion and the sport of drunkenness," are epithetic. The prostitute is the slave of illegal exaction. Moreover, the word "sport" conjures three images of the prostitute: she is the object of amorous dalliance; she is a laughing stock; she is like the victim of hunting and fishing. Prostitutes are subject to calculating, mean impulses and to vicious, uncontrolled impulses. The personification of "extortion" and "drunkenness" suggests that the prostitute is a victim of people who extort her, and who are drunk; further, it lends to the expression of the reflexive meaning that the prostitute herself participates in these sordid activities.

The second pair of adverbial phrases, "sometimes the property of one man, and sometimes the common prey of accidental lewdness," reiterates and exemplifies the parallelism of the extremes of confinement and abandonment. The prostitute is alternatively regarded as chattel and as beast. The correspondence between these phrases is complex:

sometimes the property of one man, and  
sometimes the common prey of accidental lewdness . . . .

In a sense, "common prey" in the second phrase in itself provides an adequate antithesis to "property" in the first phrase and the prepositional phrase adjoining it, particularly since the first phrase is describing, ironically, the subject of possession. Moreover, "one man" and "common" are alliterative, even assonant, and each has two





syllables; similarly, "property" and "prey" are highly alliterative; finally, sound and sense create a chiasmatic effect, marred only by the preposition "of" in the first instance, between the two elements. The grammatical correspondent of the first prepositional phrase, "of one man," "of accidental lewdness," jolts the reader. The prostitute is completely reliant on depraved, wanton impulses: she has no freedom.

Whereas the epithets in the first doublet are a generic description of the condition of the prostitute, and the second doublet elaborates the literal and figurative meaning of those epithets, the third doublet depicts a more detailed, and so more vivid image of the prostitute's daily life experience: "at one time tricked up for sale by the mistress of a brothel, at another begging in the streets to be relieved from hunger by wickedness." When she is not auctioned off by "the mistress of a brothel," she begs to be degraded so that she may be sustained.

Each successive pair of adverbial phrases is more lengthy as it divulges more of the physical, psychological, and moral misery of the "abject state." Of the final two of these phrases, "without any hope in the day but of finding some whom folly or excess may expose to my allurements, and without any reflections at night, but such as guilt and terror impress upon me," the first sums up the process of degradation described in the previous six clauses, and the last adverbial phrase adds an inner dimension: the prostitute's agonized awareness of her participation in this process. The word "impress" suggests a weight, a burden of sin of which she is terribly conscious. The antithesis between "day" and "night" paradoxically stresses the unrelenting darkness and wickedness of her sentient, religious being: "Dark is the sun, and loathsome is the day." (p. 140) The prostitute cannot resolve



her education and her principles with the importunate necessity of her physical being. The urgency of material need and of physical survival are in conflict with the urgency of spiritual imperatives. Misella's dilemma is intolerable.

Misella's natural fallibility is allowed no mercy, and no opportunity for improvement; her distorted social vision is engendered by society's failure to correct itself. Ironically, this most important aspect of Misella's apology is expressed through her lack of rhetorical integrity. Her inconsistent, flawed presentation is to motivate the reader to establish contrary principles. However, Johnson implicates the reader by appealing not only to the reader's sense of verbal irony, but further to the reader's sense of assumption: the reader is to transcend the confining limits of prejudice by responding to Misella's humanity. That is, the reader's comprehension and Johnson's technique do not, at the last, become the entire subject. Indeed, the power to encompass Misella's tragedy without being affected is to perpetrate the crime against her. In this creation of immense sympathy for the persona, Johnson fuses social and literary concerns.

Perhaps the twentieth-century reader might wonder how often the complexity of strategy of a Hogarth or a Johnson was met by simplicity of response. That the Magdalen Hospital was founded in 1758,<sup>17</sup> six years after the publication of these *Ramblers*, and twenty-six years after the publication of Hogarth's engravings, is, for instance, neither here nor there. Rather, we must assume that eighteenth-century readers recognized that such intricately structured works demand a reconstructive response.



Chapter Four  
Emotional Affectiveness in  
Life of Milton

The reader derives from Johnson's prose the impression of clarity and order; of the conscious choice and judicious arrangement of periods. Such organization lends itself not only to rhetorical persuasiveness and ethical appeal, but to an emotional affectiveness. Virginia Tufte observes that "the real action of syntax" is

a disclosure made piece by piece . . . Syntax has direction, not just structure. It starts, and goes forward, and concludes . . . As an emotional span, uniting its movement in space and time, a sentence seems to generate its own dynamics of feeling, ushering us into its meaning and escorting us across it, anticipating, deflecting, suspending, and finally going to a satisfactory close.<sup>1</sup>

Syntax orders the reader's perception, and therefore affects the reader's emotion. Johnson's language is infused with feeling and significance. Its rhythm imparts a vitality concurrent with the meaning, giving his prose an electrifying quality. The symmetrical proportions of the periods, the balanced groupings, the regular cadences provide a rich rhetorical, ethical, and emotional expression -- and appeal. If Johnson's rhythmic prose shapes his meaning and binds together his multiple vision into a holistic design, it also imparts an emotional dimension to the reading process. Syntactic form advances the understanding by carrying the development, growth, and elaboration of ideas; the striving for resolution which shapes the forward movement of the sentence and imparts direction and goal to the expression, is emotionally satisfying, pleasing through repetition, variety, surprise. That is,





Johnson is aware of the emotional and psychological implications of his tempo; the rate of his prose movement elicits an emotional response.

To substantiate such a variety of claims, it is essential to select from and examine Johnson's highest achievement in prose. W. Jackson Bate contends that Johnson in the Lives of the English Poets is, stylistically, "at his very best."<sup>2</sup> Bertrand H. Bronson calls the Lives "his most attractive work."<sup>3</sup> Robert Folkenflik, in Samuel Johnson, Biographer, claims that Johnson's style "is nowhere so wonderfully varied as in his biographies."<sup>4</sup> The Lives possess "a repertoire of styles which gives expressive variety to the whole;"<sup>5</sup> and consequently, it might be added, a range of emotional experience. Johnson's prose in The Life of Milton clearly manifests his selective imagination, his reasoning will, and his capacity to manipulate his reader by his grammatical pacing, by the controlled movement of prose in time.

Johnson in the biographical portion of the Life of Milton attempts to debunk Milton's visionary idealism. He suggests that enthusiasm, be it religious or political, and pride, are, unavoidably and inevitably, corollary initiatives. He therefore with great ironic effect uses his subject's most acclaimed creation, Paradise Lost, as the context for Milton's own life. As William McCarthy explains,

To be sure, Johnson the critic praises Paradise Lost. But Johnson the writer shows his full response to it by patterning the Life of Milton on it . . . The irony is thoroughly Miltonic. Johnson has so completely absorbed Paradise Lost that he is here writing it anew -- with Milton, ironically, in the role of Satan.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, in discussing Milton as the controversial political pamphleteer, Johnson goes so far as to paraphrase Paradise Lost: "Such is his malignity 'that hell grows darker at his frown.'"<sup>7</sup> Even the events of the monarchical restoration are cast into the epic mode of Paradise Lost,



so that Charles II is paradigmatic of Christian forgiveness; of Milton's merciful and restoring Son:

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs, and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except those whom the parliament should except . . . (p. 127)

Milton is presented as a prideful, disobedient, treasonous, Satanic anti-hero -- by means of a variety of styles, and with various effects.

In speaking of Milton's rejection of the profession of clergyman, Johnson comments that

I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation. (p. 91)

The statement of the first main clause creates suspense through its unanswered question: Milton's objection is not theological or doctrinal, but is something else. The reader moves from a sense of expectant curiosity to a more complicated, climactic involvement. In the second main clause, the nonrestrictive modifier "whether canonical or civil" defines and so delimits the nature of "obedience." The source of Milton's repugnance is, the reader divines, not a matter of principle, but a correlative of his temperament. Milton is not noble, but peevish. The reader on registering the verb phrase "raised his indignation" is forced to react with ironic contempt: the just-revealed perversity of Milton's character controverts any sympathy for his "indignation." During the span of this sentence, the reader's emotions fluctuate greatly. As we shall see, the process of reading Johnson's prose is characterized by such intense response to his rhetoric.

In the following passage, the movement from the incriminating documentary fact of the first sentence to Johnson's epigrammatic



compactness in the second definitively places Milton in relation to the anti-heroic race:

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth. (p. 106)

The import of Milton's about-face is simply and dramatically presented through the contrast between the length of the noun elements in the two main clauses of the second sentence. In the first independent clause, two relative states of virtue, described in parallel noun phrases ("He that changes his party by his humour;" "he that changes it by his interest"), are equated by means of comparison. The real element of contrast is delayed until the second main clause, where the discrepancy between the single reflexive pronoun ("himself") and the single abstract noun ("truth") is decidedly pronounced. The brief generalization of the final main clause provides a rhetorical climax and an emotional resolution to the perplexing fact of Milton's shift in sectarian allegiance.

The passage below is redolent with overtones of Satanic, Judas-like betrayal and subsequent calamity: after Cromwell's coming to power, Milton,

continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery: that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services and his flatteries to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful. (p. 116)

The sentence quoted in entirety is impassioned, but not inflammatory; Johnson's sense of outrage is not characterized by any wasteful





diffusion of emotion. The reader is not swept away by the incendiary diction (for example, "murder," "flatteries," "tyrant"), but is involved in the complexity of the cohesive structure. The categorical assertion "nothing is more just" requires affirmation: the expansion and embellishment of this base clause gives purpose and direction to the sentence. The successive clauses reveal that "nothing can be more just -- or more ironic -- than that Milton's treason should be punished by one who "could do nothing lawful." (my italics) The perjorative diction, then, contributes to the reader's enjoyment of this finally, finely realized justice.

Johnson derides Milton's theories of literary composition, his notions of the psychology, and even the physiology, of creativity, as self-involved and precious. He mocks Milton by exalting the prideful, fastidious author above a debased and inglorious race of beings:

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying Nature or a frigid zone, for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which 'they should not willingly let die.' However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity: he might still be the giant of the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind. (p. 138)

Johnson's strictly controlled, logical argument is enhanced by his comic outbursts; by his use of reductive epithets. The entirety of Milton's opinions on the composing process are described in the first sentence as having "a dread of decaying Nature or a frigid zone" as their source; this simplification is hyperbolically transformed in the second sentence



to ascribe to Milton a place among "this lagging race of frosty grovellers." The diction here is aptly figurative; its literal connotations suggest an outrageous image: the oxymoronic quality of "lagging race" predisposes the reader to imagine a contest of speed between "frosty grovellers," a chilly, slowly creeping swarm. Johnson's merriment is hereafter delayed until the conclusion of the third sentence, where the parallel noun phrases "the giant of the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind" bathetically multiply Milton's potential and diminished glories. These final phrases have a sing-song cadence, and create a delicious taunt, irresistible in its comic and rhythmic appeal: the reader is conducted to a pitch of delight in Milton's vigorous come-uppance. The consistency of Johnson's reasoning defeats Milton's over-refined intellectual sensibility; his good humour achieves a high-spirited triumph which overturns Milton's gloomy, anxious distaste of his world.

Milton's resemblance to Satan the anti-hero is evident in the character, in Johnson's summing up of Milton's political temperament, both public and private. Milton's jealous, intolerant pride is viewed as pervasive, as his prevailing passion:

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded on an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestick relations is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females,



as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion. (p. 157)

Johnson's ironic design points up the underlying hypocrisy of Milton's disposition: the author of civil treason and religious heresy submits his own domestic subjects to a hellish rule. The balance, antithesis, and elaboration of parallels unify the comprehensive analysis thoroughly and convincingly. At the same time, Johnson devises a number of ways to keep the recurrent syntactical patterns from becoming monotonous. He introduces the novelty of assonant diction ("liberty;" "liberally") to accentuate understatement, of a deftly placed modifier ("Turkish contempt") to overstate his exposition, of metaphoric expression ("break the ranks") to extend his meaning. These grammatical devices conflict with the regular pattern established in the reader's mind by the repetition, paired constructions, and measured units which define, incontrovertibly, Milton's personality.

Johnson condenses the intense and vicious political dispute between Milton and Salmasius, the French scholar, into an anti-heroic episode. Their self-important rhetorical battle is reduced by Johnson to a Lilliputian fray. The sentence which introduces the character and action of Salmasius is fraught with comic irony:

Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having by excessive praises been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published Defensio Regis. (pp. 111-12)

In the first main clause, Johnson undercuts the cumulative weight of





Salmasius' accomplishments even as he describes them. The initial nouns of the three adjective phrases, "skill," "knowledge," and "sagacity," signify a gradation of admirable qualities. However, the second set of nouns, "languages," "antiquity," and "emendatory criticism," signify an increasingly limited scope: Salmasius' abilities are, in fact, esoteric. Furthermore, the hyperbolic adverbial clause of degree, in which the purview of the academic is exaggerated into generalized "human attainment," and the alliteration of the adjectives "almost" and "all" intensifies the overstatement, imbues the entire main clause with comedy. This initial main clause, then, adumbrates Salmasius' absurd self-opinion; the reader is teased by the equivocal sense effected by the syntactical structure.

In the following participial clause, the reader's suspicion about Salmasius is substantiated: "having by excessive praises been confirmed in great confidence of himself . . . ." Salmasius shares Milton's wholly-engrossing Satanic pride. This clause and the previous clause are linked by the cognate diction "exceeding" and "excessive:" the relationship emphasizes the inflated account of his abilities. "Praises" and "confirmed" have theological import, and the reflexive pronoun "himself," coming at the end of the thought, ironically signifies that the scholar places his faith in his own person. The muted mockery of Salmasius colours the final, flatly factual predicate clause with structural irony; indeed, the concluding verb phrase punctuates Johnson's sentence with a joke: "as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published Defensio Regis." The speedy publication is ostensibly a proof of his marvellous genius; the reader, however, is amused by the implication that Salmasius considers himself to be so fine that he did not consider his subject. The reader, that is, is moved to participate



in Johnson's scorn.

Johnson satirizes Milton's feelings of self-containment, independence, and other-worldliness. He intimates that society cannot be re-created; patterns of habitual thought and action are rarely transcended:

No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations and of kings sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them. (p. 113)

Johnson makes political hay at the same time that he makes fun of these two characters. Milton and Salmasius fail to sustain a focus on abstract, general issues; they turn to familiar matters of personal concern. All is reduced to the basis of everyday commerce and mundane profession -- "trade:" so much for the political idealism of the lofty, rebellious spirit.

Just as in The Rape of the Lock the objects on the cosmetic table epitomize Belinda's self-centred, self-worshipping world, so for Milton and Salmasius the world is epitomized by picayune grammatical distinctions. The main verb "sink" in this sentence is pivotal: the large and theoretical, described in the noun phrase "the rights of nations and of kings," degenerates into the minute and petty realm of "grammar." The syntactical movement so far represents a fall from high-mindedness; the succinct conditional clause "if grammarians discuss them" lets the reader down with a bump: the two mighty combatants are but pedantic scholars.

The Satanic pride of the two scholars leads them to a misplaced sense of personal affectiveness. Moreover, their vengeful spite is ghoulish:



As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he shortened Salmasius's life; and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. (p. 115)

Johnson's comparison in the initial main clause delineates a mutual, devilish antagonism. The lurid suggestiveness of "losing his eyes" initiates a feeling of revulsion in the reader. The adverbial string "and both perhaps with more malignity than reason" brings into relief the outrageous bitterness of the two scholars. The highly understated comparison of the clause affirms the reader's sense that the reasoning of Milton and Salmasius is aberrant.

It is consistent with Milton's anti-heroic career that the work of time and chance are imputed to his superior grammatical insights and rhetorical refinements:

Salmasius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him. (p. 115)

While the obituary communicates information in a straightforward, declarative manner, the following dependent clause raises the expectation that the expressed axiomatic principle will be fulfilled; finally, however, the reader's expectations are thrown into disarray: the reader is confronted with a conclusion which contradicts sense, and which is charged with ironic possibility.

The magnificence of Johnson's expression persists throughout his consideration of Milton's poetic endeavors. Indeed, Johnson's criticism, even his wrong-headed criticism, is vividly remembered by his readers. If, for example, "the notorious paragraphs about Milton's Lycidas have really continued to rankle," Bate says, it is partially because ". . . Johnson is so much more quotable than other critics."<sup>8</sup> The reader cannot





resist delighting at times in the expression of his almost uniformly opposed conclusions about Lycidas.

Johnson's criticism of the poem is consistent with his contention that Milton has great fertility of mind, but a paucity of feeling; he is not emotionally affective, but is, at his best, intellectually overwhelming. When he is not at his best, when he lacks a subject with a large scope, he is boring. The poem, in short, has too many trappings, and not enough grief:

Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the  
heathen deities, Jove and Phoebus, Neptune and Aeolus,  
with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a  
College easily supplies. (p. 164)

In the noun series, the alliteration of the three nouns, the repeated "fl's," "c's," "s's," and "o's," and the repeated conjunction "and," imitate the harsh diction and the unpleasing numbers (p. 163) of which Johnson complains in his introductory remarks on the poem. On reaching the verb "appear," the reader is prepared for something to manifest itself. However, the colourless adjective and the common noun in "the heathen deities" do not evoke vivid, interesting images. The following appositive noun pairs typify what Folkenflik calls, in discussing the Life of Shenstone, "the Johnsonian antipastoral mode, and the unnecessary doubling of terms" which is Johnson's "way of dramatizing the excessive nature of the imagination he attacks."<sup>9</sup> The catalogue of names is indeed redundant; however, the ponderous, deliberate rhythm sustains an anticipatory interest. In the adverbial "with a long train," the prepositional object "train" emphasizes the notion that Milton's exercise is empty pomp. Ironically, the noun phrase adds to the already long list of concrete and proper nouns.



The highly alliterative and polysyllabic noun phrase "mythological imagery" has a resonant sound, but conjures up no images: the collective noun "imagery," because it is singular, cannot even personify "a long train." Johnson's ironic technique parodies Milton's flawed poetic.

Finally, the adjective clause, "such as a College easily supplies," explodes the entire weighty concentration of "things." In fact, the sentence terminates with the second of the two verbs. Johnson abruptly ends the sentence with the suggestion that he has displayed only a partial inventory of stock-in-trade stores, of nouns. The pithy summation of this final clause provides a comic climax which is effectively to the point. The contextually personified "College" dispensing facile "imagery" provides a refreshing and lively image: the reader is affected by the novelty of experiencing a creative use of language.

The following sentence is also constructed to delay Johnson's impatient and humourous contradiction of Milton's use of hackneyed devices:

Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. (p. 164)

The reader is impressed by the emphatic rhythm of the first main clause. The repetition involved in the parallelism of the two verb phrases creates an insistent beat. A natural stress falls on the direct objects "knowledge" and "invention," because they are in the end position of each phrase: this contributes to the emphasis. The juxtaposition of the subject "nothing" with the repeated adverb "less" accentuates the insistent movement of the prose.



The intensity created by the measured phrasing of this clause is in contrast to the monotony of the sprawling dimension of that following it: "to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping . . . ." This random association of self-centred complaints is succeeded by the trenchant, parodic condensation of a lyrical episode: "and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell." The repetition of diction hastens the pace, and mocks the insipid recitation of the gods. Johnson's rhythmic pattern imitates and ridicules the simple-minded recounting of idyllic stories. Ironically, the passage ends, as the description of the pastoral begins, with the verb "tell."

According to Johnson, Milton's Comus, like his Lycidas, is marred by a lack of feeling and an overabundance of words. Johnson imitates, in the parodic manner reminiscent of the already-quoted Lycidas passages, the desultory dialogue of the characters in Comus:

At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity;  
and when they have feared lest their sister should be  
in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the  
Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the  
Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher. (p. 168)

The tedium of the characters' discourse is dramatized by the accretion of parallel clauses. The parallelism of the verb phrases, "feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger," mimics their belaboured expression. The final two main clauses represent the masque's lack of dramatic coherence, as each character expresses diverse and irrelevant intellectual abstractions: the younger brother does not "find" his lost and endangered sister, but a delight in talking.





Comus lacks dramatic intensity, and emotional affectiveness.

Johnson's style allows us to feel the inadequacy of Milton's pastoral, and of his drama: the reader participates in Johnson's critical, and his emotional irritation. However, he does not leave the reader frustrated, but resolves the poetic or dramatic flaw by means of his seductive rhythms and reconstructive language.

Essentially, then, Johnson constructs syntactical symbolism, which Tufte defines as occurring when "the drama of meaning and the drama of syntax coincide perfectly . . . syntax as action becomes syntax as enactment . . ."<sup>10</sup> In the following sentence, in which Johnson praises Milton, the syntax enacts the subject of critical uniformity:

Of the two pieces, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. (p. 165)

The division of the sentence into very short measures -- no unit has more than six words -- means that clauses, phrases, words receive due stress; the rhythm is regular and deliberate. Moreover, the clauses are ordered to ensure a precise, even balance. The main clause "I believe opinion is uniform" is interposed between the prepositional phrase with adjectival function which names the literature, and the second main clause which expresses the common experience of the literature.

Consequently, the general opinion of the works is as pronounced as Johnson's "belief." In the adjective clause, the appositive structure, "L'Allegro and Il Penseroso," gives equal weight to each work. The placement of the modification structure at the beginning of the sentence allows the paratactic balance, the settled assurance, of the two main clauses. The conjunction of the adjectival "that reads them" with the verbal "reads them with pleasure" results in the adjoining of "reads



them, reads them," and in the caesura between them. The slowed tempo emphasizes the repetition, the uniformity of the words, and, consequently, the uniformity of the sentiment of "pleasure."

Johnson never loses sight of his general thesis in his evaluation of the range of Milton's works: "The highest praise of genius is original invention." (p. 194) Johnson maintains the omnipresence of his thesis by enacting his own creative genius throughout his critical exposition. He revels in self-conscious syntactic symbolism:

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance. (p. 177)

The order and movement of the syntactical expansion are exactly congruent with his rhetorical intent: he wishes to enact Milton's splendid expansiveness. Few writers can get away with this abstract and generic style; yet his language is accurately and lucidly general. For example, the consecutive participial chain vivifies a concurrence of multifarious imaginative activity. The strong verbal force of the participles is complemented by the adjectival, descriptive force of the nouns; furthermore, the nouns acquire abstract, representative prominence from the generalizing force of the definite article "the." As a result, the sequence of words enacts "the power" of which Johnson speaks. The appending of the final independent clause lengthens the sentence even more. Yet, while "extravagance" ends the period, Johnson, like Milton, cannot be censured for excess. Johnson's enthusiasm is justified, like Milton's, by his subject, and by his own bountiful store of stylistic



artifice.

Johnson pays tribute to Milton through the generative power of his own language. In the following passage, Johnson again links himself to Milton by assuming his techniques:

His similes are less numerous and more various than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope and all the wonders which the telescope discovers. (p. 179)

The reader is brought into contact with Milton's image-making power by Johnson's own ability to involve and excite the reader's imagination. In the first sentence, Johnson achieves a critically empirical focus through syntax: he defines an aspect of Milton's style quantitatively, through comparison. The second sentence is a qualitative, and a quantitative comparison: Milton's similes are better, because comprehensive. The first main clause introduces a metaphor of space as Milton is represented as breaking beyond constraining barriers of imaginative thought. In the second main clause, this metaphor is transformed into one of visual, telescopic magnification: Milton transcends the mundane to magnify images. One element of Johnson's metaphoric construction is rooted in a concrete, scientific discovery; the other by the very real affective power of Milton's poetic.<sup>11</sup> Johnson enacts the ability he describes as he expands his kernel meaning through the pointed, imagistic medium of his prose; through his own amplifying, empirical imagination.

In the third sentence, the noun "discovery" implies Galileo's work, as well as the scientific, heavenly world disclosed to humanity.





The noun phrase "all the wonders" is framed by the noun "telescope" and the cognate diction "discovery" and "discovers." Therefore, Johnson's syntactical structure focuses on the limitless, yet accurate, scope which the scientific and the poetic genius create for others. The reader comprehends with wonderment.

The purpose of Johnson's affective focus is profound. As Bate says of Johnson,

Constantly, as he expresses himself, we have the sense of a living originality -- of the genuine personality of an experiencing nature -- operating upon all the facts of life.<sup>12</sup>

His prose conducts the movements that reflect for the reader his or her own responses in the face of a wholeness, a totality of experience impossible to know. Johnson makes life more accessible, not because we can ever comprehend its entire significance, but because we can at least develop a healthful attitude to living.



## Conclusion

Johnson's voice communicates a pervasively ironic sense. He impresses upon us, again and again, the tragi-comic incongruity between expectation and experience, between human belief and human nature. He perceives a world in which judicious, compassionate people are morally obliged to resist moral and social passivity, yet who are impotent to effect change in psychological existence. Johnson does not attempt to initiate moral or qualitative progress, but rather to contribute to experiential, material progress. He rejects the notion of the progressive realization of the ideal, choosing instead to involve his audience in the activity of immediate experience, the fluidity of which is, paradoxically, constant. He thereby suggests that peace of mind does not emerge from stasis, but rather that happiness is a concomitant of mental action. Johnson does not aim to rarefy the sensibilities, but to expand them. He attempts to generate answers to human ills from within social and cultural traditions. The formal properties of his works, therefore, are symptomatic of a sort of "double-vision;" of his reformist tendencies. He assumes a supplicatory attitude to overturn his patron; he takes on the imaginary forces of Milton at his worst, or of stultified critics and editors, and transforms bad literature into good; Misella's predicament, and not her ideas, are to suggest a model of social reform. Johnson's singularly brave and consistent battles with moral cowardice and social indifference, embodied in a style at once commanding and inviting, establishes him as a descendent and a progenitor of the most sympathetic humanism in our evolving culture.



Chapter One

- <sup>1</sup>Donald Greene, Samuel Johnson (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 38.
- <sup>2</sup>W. Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 257.
- <sup>3</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Letters of Samuel Johnson, with Mrs. Thrale's Genuine Letters to Him, ed. R.W. Chapman, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 64-5.
- <sup>4</sup>Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), p. 182.
- <sup>5</sup>Bertrand H. Bronson, "The Double Tradition of Dr. Johnson," A Journal of English Literary History, XVIII, 2 (1951), 10-106, rpt. in The Augustan Age, ed. Ian Watt (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 110.
- <sup>6</sup>Fussell, p. 118.
- <sup>7</sup>Ian Watt, "The Ironic Voice," The Listener (April 27, 1967), rpt. in The Augustan Age, ed. Ian Watt (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publication, Inc., 1968), p. 110.

Chapter Two

- <sup>1</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Volume VII, Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 70.
- <sup>2</sup>Johnson, p. 88.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 71.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 81 ff.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 59.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>9</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Volume V, The Rambler, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 61.





- <sup>10</sup>Johnson, Volume VII, p. 62.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.
- <sup>12</sup>W. Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 402.
- <sup>13</sup>Johnson, pp. 71-2.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.
- <sup>15</sup>Jean H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1952), p. 47.
- <sup>16</sup>Bate, p. 396.
- <sup>17</sup>Johnson, p. 99.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>20</sup>Morris Golden, The Self Observed (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972), p. 76.
- <sup>21</sup>Bate, p. 406.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 405.

### Chapter Three

- <sup>1</sup>John B. Radner, "Samuel Johnson, The Deceptive Imagination, and Sympathy," Studies in Burke and His Time, 16, No. 51 (Fall, 1974), pp. 43-4.
- <sup>2</sup>Jean H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1952), p. 28.
- <sup>3</sup>Ronald Paulson, The Art of Hogarth (London: Phaidon, 1975), p. 22.
- <sup>4</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Volume V, The Rambler, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 135, Note 1. All future references to this text will be noted in the body of the discussion.
- <sup>5</sup>Paulson, Plate 24, Note.
- <sup>6</sup>Donald Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

The contextual structure is clear enough, but knowledge of Johnson's views on France and on colonialism clinches the



argument that Misella's conclusion is ill-advised. (It is tempting to quip from Johnson's London: "I cannot bear a French metropolis.") Greene observes that "Johnson sees no virtue in a nation's founding colonies . . . Emigration is a form of escapism, which Johnson always distrusts. France founded her settlements in the 'cold, uncomfortable, uninviting region' of Canada, only to 'provide a drain into which the waste of an exuberant nation might be thrown . . .'" (pp. 165-6). "One argument of 'Gallo-Anglus,' that they [the colonies] provide a dumping ground for undesirables, Johnson quickly dismisses: 'I do not very clearly see the consequence that, because there are lands in America, there need be no beggars in England. Our beggars are not beggars because we want land, but either by impotence, idleness, ignorance of the arts of life, or misfortune.'" (p. 170) Greene remarks that Johnson "finds mass emigration no solution to the ills of a country: 'It ought to be considered that every inhabitant gained to the colonies is lost to the mother country . . . The strength of every country consists in the number of people proportionate to its extent, and it is not the populousness of a nation that produces beggars and strollers, but want of due regulation.'" (p. 170)

<sup>7</sup>Paulson, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Plate 25.

<sup>9</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson: Volume III, The Rambler, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 299.

<sup>10</sup>James Boswell, Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G.B. Hill, vol. II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>Paulson, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>Sherry O'Donnell, "'Tricked out for Sale': Samuel Johnson's Attitude toward Prostitution," On Eighteenth-Century Literature: Transactions of the Samuel Johnson Society of the Northwest 1978 (Victoria: The Queen's Printer, 1979), p. 126.

<sup>13</sup>O'Donnell, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>16</sup>Johnson, Volume V, p. 145.

"in France they annually evacuate their streets . . ." (my italics).

<sup>17</sup>Betsy Rodgers, "Paupers and Prostitutes: Jonas Hanway," Cloak of Charity: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Philanthropy (London: Methuen,



1949), pp. 42-61.

#### Chapter Four

- <sup>1</sup>Virginia Tufte, Grammar as Style (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp. 8-9.
- <sup>2</sup>W. Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 542.
- <sup>3</sup>Bertrand H. Bronson, ed., Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. xvi.
- <sup>4</sup>Robert Folkenflik, Samuel Johnson, Biographer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 194.
- <sup>5</sup>Folkenflik, p. 187.
- <sup>6</sup>William McCarthy, "The Moral Art of Johnson's Lives," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 17, No. 4 (Autumn, 1977), p. 515.
- <sup>7</sup>Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, vol. I, ed. G.B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 104. All future references to this text will be noted in the body of the discussion.
- <sup>8</sup>Bate, p. 538.
- <sup>9</sup>Folkenflik, p. 193.
- <sup>10</sup>Tufte, p. 11.
- <sup>11</sup>Jean H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1952).  
  
Hagstrum quotes Johnson's explanation that "A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point and is more excellent as the lines approach from a greater distance . . ." (p. 118). Hagstrum explains that "Although in the perfect simile the two elements of the comparison ought to come together from a great distance, they should both originate in reality . . . when considered separately, as they originally were before the artist brought them together, they must be real . . . Both sides should be drawn from life and reality. They become metaphor only when brought together." (p. 119)
- <sup>12</sup>Bate, p. 4.





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